

61 MWV Kwartaal Joernaal

61 MVA Quarterly Journal



**UITGAWE 3 / EDITION 3
MAART 2023**

IN HIERDIE UITGAWE

**TOUR TO THE INGWE
BATTLEFIELD
SEPTEMBER 2022**

**DIE ROL VAN
1 SAI BN
IN DIE GRENSOORLOG**

**SITUATION REPORT
COMMUNITY SAFETY**

**VETERANE VAARDIGHEDE
UIT DIE
MILITÊRE HANDBOEK**



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EDITORIAL

This is the third issue of the 61 MVA Quaterly Journal.
Just a reminder on the Aim of the Journal.

To be a mouth piece for the EXCO.

To report on current affairs within the 61 Veterans group.

To create a forum for research articles related to 61 Mech.

Regards

The Editor

Oor die Voorblad Foto

Gedurende September 2022 het Bravo Kompanie 1987 getoer na die Lomba rivier na waar Bravo op 13 September 1987 hulle eerste gevegte gehad het. In die voorgrond staan Johan Kooij met die Russiese Tenk wat deur sy Ratel 90 (Roepsein 72) op 13 September 1987 uitgeskiet is. Dit was die eerste Tank wat deur 61 Meg uitgeskiet was in Ops Modular. Die Ratel 90 (RS 72) is die volgende jaar (1988) uitgeskiet noord van Calueque en 2/Lt Muller Meiring het die hoogste prys betaal.

Chairman's Message / Voorsitters Boodskap Johan Booysen

Dear Veterans and 61 family,

As 2023 is steaming ahead we want to wish all our brothers and their families the best for this year. Exco also want to thank each and every person for their support to 61 MVA in 2022.

Challenges were faced by all but the unity in our association is what pulled us all together and made 2022, once again, a memorable one. This year started with HP Ferreira and his numerous tests and doctors visits, brothers support and planning for the year ahead. We looked back at 2020 and 2021- where our annual Memorial service were held at various venues throughout South Africa- and decided to challenge 2023 to the same. Cape Province, Natal and Free State would simultaneously have a Memorial service in their respective areas as Gauteng. Cost of Accommodation, Flights and Food has sky-rocketed after Covid and we are trying to keep this important day as cost effective as possible. We request herewith all our members to please support our Memorials countrywide in August 2023.



Jannie Nieuwoudt and his team will keep us up to speed with venues and times. Let's make this year the largest Memorial ever. Date 19/08/2023, Gauteng Memorial will be at Ditsong Museum. The Gariep get together in May will once again this year be one of the important dates on the calendar. Reserve the weekend of 5,6 and 7 May and we hope to see you all there. If you need any details contact us on admin@61mech.org.za.

Met die afskop van 2023 snel die jaar teen 'n groot tempo. Hiermee wil ek graag al ons broers en 61 familie die beste toewens vir hierdie jaar. Ons as Exco wil u ook bedank vir die ondersteuning in 2022. Verlede jaar was 'n uitdaging vir almal van ons maar ons sterk broederskap het 2022 vir 61 MVV weer 'n besonderse jaar gemaak. Die afskop van hierdie jaar was HP Ferreira se dokters besoeke en menigte mediese toetse, saam met makker hulp en beplanning vir die jaar wat voorlê.

Met die sterk opkoms in 2020 en 2021 by verskeie Gedenkdienste landswyd gaan ons 2023 iets soortgelyks probeer. Kaapstad, Natal en Vrystaat gaan op dieselfde dag as Gauteng 'n Gedenkdienste hou landswyd. Met die kostes van vlugte, akkomodasie en kos wat tans die hoogtes in skiet, wil ons graag die Gedenkdienste so koste effektief vir almal maak. Ons vra u om ons asseblief te ondersteun by die verskeie dienste wat aangebied gaan word in Augustus 2023.

Jannie Nieuwoudt en sy skouerskuur span sal almal op hoogte hou van die plekke en tye in die verskeie provinsies. Reserveer 19 Augustus 2023 vir die diens. Gauteng vind plaas te Ditsong museum in Johannesburg. 'n Ander hoogtepunt is weer die Gariep naweek wat sover een van die hoogte punte was in die verlede. Reserveer die naweek van 5,6 en 7 Mei. Hoop om julle daar te sien. Vir enige navrae stuur gerus 'n e-pos na:

admin@61mech.org.za

Mech Greetings / Mech groete
Johan Booysen

Who is Who in 61 MVA

Johan Booysen

*Chairman of the 61 Mech EXCO and the
61 Mechanised Bn Gp Military Veterans Association*

In the story of 61 Mech Bn Gp one meets up with numerous characters. Some of those are well known. Others are relatively unknown except to their close friends. One such a person is Johan Booysen. Johan is currently serving as the Chairman of the EXCO of 61 MVA. He was voted in August 2018 and ever-since steering the 61 Mech boat with great dedication and compassion.

He was pivotal in the organisation of some of the Angola Battlefield tours and built bridges of understanding between the South Africans and the Angolan senior military command.

He was instrumental in opening doors for veterans intending to visit Angola and the battle-fields. And sometimes opened doors where no doors existed.

His dedication did not stop with battlefield tours, but also with fund-raising for other 61 Mech projects. His largest contribution and passion is to assist 61 Mech veterans in need. He travelled widely at own expense to support “Skouerskure” the Munga cycle effort and so much more. He navigated uncharted areas physically and as a matter of speech.

He involved his family as well. His personal motto as member of 61 Mech and as Chairman of 61 MVA is:

“I Serve”

I was requested by Dawid Lotter to write a short piece about myself and my background. I am not the type of person that believes in single success. I always surround myself with people as I was brought up in a typical South African family. Family always comes first.

I matriculated in 1986 from Florida High School. Was called up to Infantry School February 1987 intake. Then landed up at 3 SAI in Potch. Couple months later was placed on “afgedeelde diens” with North West Command. Typical NP this gave us the opportunity to go on pass every weekend. No control and plenty of sitting around time.

August 1987 we were taking up a convoy of trucks up to Namibia. We had done this numerous times before and this was where my life started changing. Upon reaching Omuthiya with the vehicles, we arrived just before sunset. Typical NSM's we just stood around talking and smoking. The next minute we heard a bouldering shout from the office. A RSM with a red face came towards us with some few Military swearwords about us hanging around his unit. “Tree aan!!!!” Our Sergeant that was in charge of the convoy was just as Red faced as the RSM. HKGK, my first in-



teraction with RSM Kemp.

The man that changed my life. He wanted volunteers. The first thing you learn in the army is you never volunteer. You shut up and look at the trees or sky, you try and become invisible to every person looking for a volunteer. As none of us stepped forward he decided to choose his own volunteers. Well Wayne and myself were two of the seven he indicated. Wayne Laatz and me met after basics and we are still friend today. 36 Years later.

Long story short we only planned for a week trip and had the absolute minimum clothes in our “Balsak’s”. Needless to say it ended up in a six month trip away from my unit.

We left Omuthiya one hour later travelling to Rundu. Here our vehicles were adapted and more air cooling holes were cut into the “Kwêe Voëls”. Not really knowing what this was all about we just hanged around as normal. We left Rundu and travelled east, eventually turned North. Over a bridge and onto a dirt road.

Wayne which was a “Mc Guyver type” took out his map and started checking which road we were taking. His torch bouncing all over the map due to the shaking of the vehicle. “Boet, we are in Angola”, he muttered. Not really listening or taking notice of his self conversation we drove on for another hour. Eventually we stopped. We were all called to the RSM.s Ratel. Gatvol of the dust and sleep deprived we strolled to RSM Kemp’s Ratel.

“Welkom in Angola manne!” This was the last I expected! How, why, what the heck are we doing in Angola? Wayne and myself drove further without much discussion. Eventually he said: “Boet we don’t have R4’S or anything to protect ourselves with?!”



The hatch was closed as well as doors locked. I was an eighteen year old not knowing what or where this was leading. Many questions and no answers.

Travelling north in daylight we heard a “Victor – Victor” alert on the Radio- “Visgraat” was the command. The only “Visgraat” I knew was in fish and we quickly learned what the meaning was thereof. This is no game any-more. We could see the two dots above us in the sky. What is this all about? At that stage I had no clue.

We drove for a day or two and eventually arrived at Mavinga. This was to be our home for a couple of months. Wayne and myself had the water bunker and had the pleasure of driving to go refill every now and then. We met up with the Ratels every now and then to refill and re stock them with fuel, water etc. End November we flew back to Namibia from Mavinga. The Old manne from Bravo 87 had to clear-out and we were returning with them. Taken to the “Deurgangskamp” just North of Rundu, we had the opportunity to wash and get a haircut, not smelling as bad as we use to. Here we received our t-shirts and pen- “Ek



was daar, I did my bit!” All I was interested in was getting back to South Africa and having my life back.

We were transported via road on the back of a truck and flew back to Kimberley, Bosverlof of 14 Days. At Kimberley Airport we were searched and ammo was recovered -from a hand grenade to a Knife or two. I arrived back in JHB around ten at night. First contact I had with my family since leaving in August. They had no clue where I was and what happened to me. We were told to report to Jan Smuts middle of December 1987.

On reporting to Jan Smuts we were around 30 head strong. Once again I got the short straw. Only 12 of us were picked to return via Safair North. This time I was the only person from my unit that was picked. We flew in to Rundu the morning and the same night back to Mavinga. From here we were transported via truck North West. Joining up with the Force in the morning hours. This time I inherited a Samil 100 Diesel Bunker, battered and looking like a scrapheap. This is not what my first experience was. Now we moved around with the Ratels and things were different.

Pik Botha flew up with a chopper to come visit us, (Somewhere between Christmas and New year if I remember correctly). There is good news and bad news. Good news it's raining in SA, bad news? We staying longer. I remember the guys responding in a very negative way. My mood dropped as I was missing home, missed Christmas at home and now also my Birthday will be in another country.

I could feel the fear and see the aftermath of combat on young men my age. “What are we doing here?, I asked myself often. I am moving in the shadows of warriors. Early February if my memory is correct we left to go fetch Diesel from bladders at a filling point.



Paul Morris - Johan Booysen

There was a shortage of Diesel and that effected the progress. After three days we eventually received the Diesel. While waiting I started getting sick, Fever and vomiting, jippo guts like I never had before. We started returning back to the fighting force. The shaking and diesel smells were getting too much for my system. I eventually fell asleep while driving, waking up when I hit a tree. There was no one around me, I was all alone. But I was so weak that I didn't care. I opened the door and stepped out of the truck. To sick to care and vomiting like crazy. I lay there for two days, every sip of water just released more vomiting.

Eventually I had the strength to get back into my vehicle and followed the tracks. The spoor was so deep in the soft sand that you could literally let the vehicle steer itself. A couple of hours later I pulled into the laager. As I came in I was stopped by a Colonel, screaming and swearing at me, “Waar die F@k was jy troep? Die hele flippen Army soek jou”. I tried to explain but his screaming was harder than my explanation. “Go to the Medics”, he instructed me, I still felt dizzy and went to the medical vehicle.



Malaria and Hepatitis B was what I was diagnosed with. I was placed on the back of a Kwê and a bunch of us were sent back to Mavinga. We flew out that night and eventually back to 1 Mill. We had to strip naked and our clothes were destroyed. We were under quarantine for a couple of days and sent home after two weeks. 6 Weeks at home before returning back to North West Command. On my return I was screamed at as no one knew where the heck I had been. My life never felt the same, I never connected with my old buddy's at North west. Always felt I belonged somewhere else.

I think a lot of us always felt that we missed something in life, there is something we left behind somewhere.

In 2014 I read the book Back to Angola by Paul Morris - maybe this is what I must do. My drinking was getting out of hand and I needed something that was missing in my life.

As every good story starts with a Double Whisky at a braai, we decided to put a trip together to Angola. So said so done. Paul was very helpful and introduced us to "Blah" (Nick name). We had numerous meetings with this gent and tied up May 2015 as "D-Date". So much has been written about the Angolan tours. We made contact in Menongue with Fernando Mateus. My first thoughts was that he is arrogant and pushy. Within an hour after meeting him he instructed us that the females in our group were to go sleep at his residence in Menongue for their safety.

I stepped in and politely told him that my daughter will not leave our site and will stay with us. Major discussions were entered into between him and the translator. He was not happy with my answer, I told the translator to tell Fernando that no person will harm Tammy while her three uncles and myself were alive. He reached out his hand to me and we shook hands.



This was the start of a friendship we still have today.

Our friendship has build bridges between the Angolans and 61 Mech over the years. He is a loyal person that has protected and opened doors over numerous 61 Tours.

I decided to use the latest Bravo 87 tour to give our members the insides over a tour and the arrangements to help keep everybody safe and on track. Although this tour was arranged by the Bravo 87 group, Exco always helps and ensures that we keep the wheels rolling. The safety of the Members and their families stays our priority.

On the build up to the tour Rob Torrani was the main contact with us as well as Angola. As Covid was still a reality in Angola we had to help put measures in place for an easy border crossing and a quick Covid result outcome. Although we supplied Customs and Immigration with details before the trip Africa is always a challenge and always be prepared for a curve-ball or two. We managed to get them through in under four hours. The pre arrangement of Exchange Rate for monies and a trustworthy person to do so also gets



pre- arranged beforehand.

On the Smokeshell and Bravo tour there was a shortage of Diesel in Angola. Using contacts that we have made over the years, we ensured reserves to be kept at Ondgiva for both North and South movement of the tours. Sometimes the group was not even aware of these shortages. (Usually in cases like these, Diesel is reserved only for Angolan government officials). Accommodation was always a challenge as tours can be expensive. We therefore pre arrange places to stay. Its not travelling in SA as some places has no toilets and/or running water. This can become a challenge for some tour members as people expect caravan parks and Hotels.

We always rely on safe and secure places that accommodate the size of the tour. Hotels are available in some towns but our groups are normally too big to handle. The other reason is Malaria, the risk of contracting it while staying in a built up area with the locals is much higher than keeping your group away and far outside towns.

In the Bravo tour one member lost two tyres in one day. After the first tyre was damaged we already started arrangements for a replacement tyre. Murphy's law! - I received a call after lunchtime that he lost a second tyre. In SA two phone calls later, you will have one ready to fit. In Angola it is a different story. Ten phone calls later we had two tyres arranged. The supplier stayed open till 24H00 waiting for Rob to arrive in Menongue and then at 08h00 on a public Holiday they opened to fit it at another facility. This all gets arranged from SA per telecon.

The other challenge was the transport from Cuito to the Lomba "Doelwit". We pre-arranged two Urals to take the group to the Lomba. Only one arrived, after numerous calls a second one was sent from Menongue to Cuito. Saturday afternoon I received a call from Rob via Sat phone. They were brought to the Lomba, and a mere 10 km from the "doelwit", the commanding officer placed in charge refused to allow them to go further. (In Angola, the Military is still in charge of many areas). Up to today we still believe that this was a pre-arranged tactic to prevent 61 Bravo to get there. But no stone was left unturned. I started negotiating with the commanding officer which was adamant about minefields between their position and the area of concern. Needless to say, while Rob was marching up and down with the phone at the Lomba, we were on

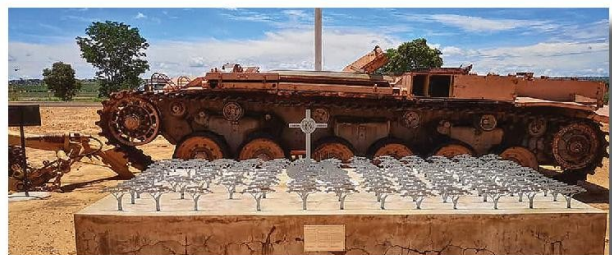
the phone with Luanda as well as Menongue. Eventually the commanding officer was instructed by a General to take the group to their intended area. Bravo 87 reached their goal.

On returning to Cuito the group split up and we now had two different arrangements to keep track of. New accommodation had to be arranged for the whole group in Matala and another in Ongiva. Due to communication challenges it turns out to be five phone calls later for each arrangement. The one challenge normally is that the Administrators normally want to show their goodwill by placing the group in town for all to see. This for them is a secure environment. We want to be outside of town, thus always major explanation about security and goodwill.

From going onto Google Maps to guide people through towns they have never been before, (and where signals are non-existent) to ensuring they keep to their timeliness to make their flights from Windhoek. This is an Angola tour from SA.

One member also had an incident while travelling through Lubango. Rob called in a panic. "We have a problem. They have taken him to the local Police station for investigating the incident." I called Luanda and spoke to a contact we made on previous visits to Fernando. He was very helpful in resolving the issue within a couple of minutes. The locals were going to try scam money out of this member. After explaining who the group was, the issue was resolved very quickly and sufficiently. By the time the member reached the police station, the problem had been resolved and sorted out, and the member was free to leave without any further investigations.

Our friendship with the Angolans, has opened many doors which were once closed for all. There is a mutual respect amongst ourselves and the Angolans. I have included the above short insert only for one reason - to show that the brotherhood in 61MVA is what makes it home. We look out for each other, support each other and we always have each others' six.

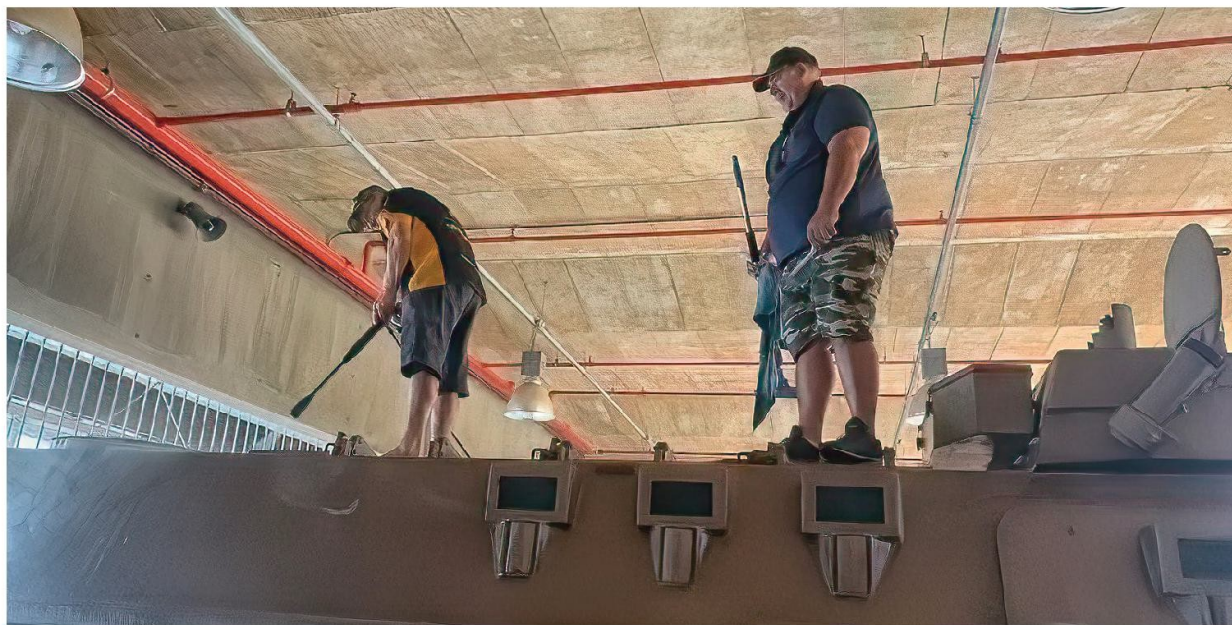


Hoogtepunte van die Afgelope Kwartaal

Highlights of the Past Quarter

28 January

The Ditsong Museum in Johannesburg is the host to the 61 Mech museum corner. On 28 January as a gesture of solidarity, a group of 61 Mech Veterans assembled at Ditsong with tools and cleaning material to clean the large items on display. Some Veterans brought their kids with. The afternoon they departed to the Moth Cottlesloe Shellhole for a Skouerskuur.



5 February

Today 61 Riders KZN participated in a biker event run by the CMA.

Anthony Turton



18 February

Middagete George





Gauteng Skouerskuur 25 February



Gauteng Skouerskuur 25 Maart

Thank you to everyone that attended the skouerskuur on Saturday. It was a rainy day but it still was great. .
 Thank you Annemie Kirstein for the pap en sous; it's always a winner. Len, Wynne a thanks to you as well for a great venue.

John Damian Barnard



18 March

61 KZN manne Skouskuur at Mills Bomb Shellhole



18 March - 61 Riders



Today we rode with HAMC Durban to remember one of their fallen Brothers. They have a tradition that says an Angel only dies when nobody mentions their name again. So they keep on repeating that name to keep the memory alive. 61 Riders KZN will support HAMC in whatever way is appropriate as we grow this relationship to the mutual benefit of all parties.

Anthony Turton

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25 Maart 2023

Kobus Kemp

Alpha Kompanie echelon 1988 se 35 Jaar reünie in Pretoria. Dankie Pieter en Sarel wat die Reunie gereel het. S/Sers Cas Nel se Ech manne julle is Ysters. Julle bly YSTERS OP Hooper, OP Exide, Pruim, Linger bly om julle te sien na 35 jaar. Ongelooflik hartroerend laat mens vinnig terug dink, wie sal dit ooit vergeet. Hulle wat nie saam met ons terug gekeer het nie.



So proud to see that 61 Riders is becoming part of the greater biker fraternity. I salute the 61MVA Exco leadership for their guidance and wisdom in following the path they have chosen. It's the right thing to do.

Anthony Turton



C SQUADRON

***2 SPECIAL SERVICE BATTALION ATTACHED TO 61 MECH BN GP
NOVEMBER 1987 TILL MARCH 1988 OPERATION HOOPER REUNION***

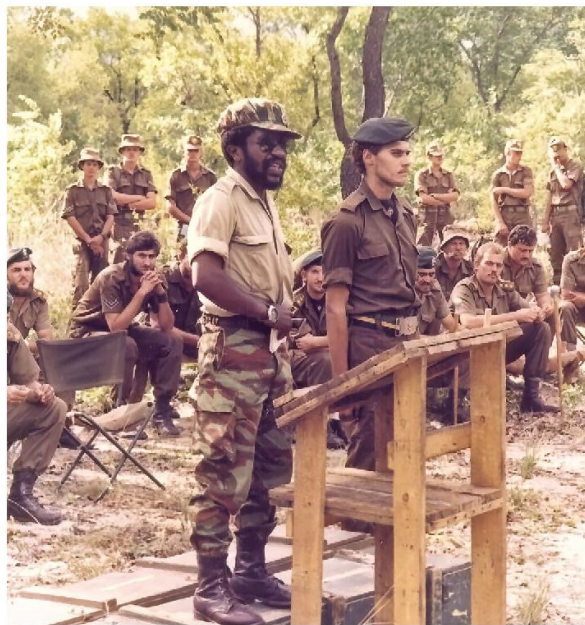
By: Johann Human



The most memorable event for us while we were at Mavinga was the invitation to attend the “Kierieparade” of Maj Dawid Lotter and S/Sgt Ben Smit of B Coy 61 Meg that participated in Operation Modulêr. The parade ground was hacked out of the thick bush and General Bok of Unita present every member of B company with a kerie, engraved with the Bravo Coy logo.

BRIEF HISTORY

C Squadron 2 SSB that participated in Operation Hooper was January 1987 intake and was trained by Lt/Col Jakes Jacobs, Col Eddie Nel and WO1 P.J. Vorster. When the signal came from Army Headquarters that 2 SSB must send a Squadron to relieve Capt. P.J. Cloete's Squadron that demolished the 47th brigade of Fapla at the Lomba river, the honour fell on C Squadron 2SSB and due to the nature of the operation it was decided that no married staff member will be sent to Angola. It was then decided to replace WO1 Vorster with myself as the Squadron Sergeant Major. Jakes and I flew to Mavinga to prepare for the take over and our squadron arrived a week later. The take over went without a hitch and suddenly we were part of Operation Hooper.



C-Eskadron suksesvol in Ops. Hooper

C-Eskadron van 1997/98 het suksesvol, onder bevel van Kaplt. Jakes Jacobs, aan Operasie Hooper, deelgeneem. Die tweede-in-bevel was lt. Eddie Nel.

Die doel van die operasie was om hulp aan Unita te verskaf ten einde die FAPLA aanmars na Mavinga in Suidwes-Angola te stuit. Operasie Hooper, wat deel uitgemaak het van 'n reeks operasies, was uniek in die opsig dat tenke vir die eerste keer gebruik is in operasies van die SA Loër sodat die Tweede Wêreldoorlog.

Die foto's op hierdie bladsy vertel 'n deel van hierdie verhaal.



Op pad na die front
lewers naby Mavinga.



Kersoggend in
Angola.

V.l.n.r.: S/ers. J.U.P.
Human, sers. Verwey,
lt. E. Nel en kaplt. J.
Jacobs na vier maan-
de in die bos.





Background

My erstwhile Squadron Commander and friend Lt/Col (Ret) Jakes Jacobs instituted a tradition where SAAC members get together on his farm outside Bela Bela for a “Bosbraai”. The members attending will bring their meat and drinks and we gather in the bush where no-one can disturb us and then we braai and enjoy each other’s company.

During the last get together me and Jakes decided it was time for a Squadron reunion of our 87/88 NSM Troopers serving under us during Operation Hooper. A date was set, and we went to work on social media contacting the guys, asking them how they feel about such an event and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. A WhatsApp group for the event was created by Gary Wilson to organize the event. The date was set for the 11th of February 2023, and it was all systems go.



Lt Nel Sgt Human Capt Jacobs

The Reunion

As the date of the reunion draw nearer the anticipation among the troopers were high. I could see in the way they communicated on the group that they couldn't wait to see each other after all these years. The 11th of February dawned. A cloudy and rainy day. The original plan was to hold the reunion in our original "Bos-braai" format" but the rain had other plans and we had to move the venue 500m up the road where Jakes had a nice roofed venue. The men started to arrive at 8:00. They were from all over the country. From Phalaborwa to Jeffreys Bay to Durban. We had to introduce ourselves again because after 36 years faces changed, body shapes changed, and names faded as the years go by.

When everybody arrived and were settled in, we had a short ceremony. Jakes welcomed everybody and thereafter Jup paid a short tribute to all the SADF members that paid the highest price during the operation with a special mention of L/Cpl Vito Lacauna who was a member of C squadron. The saying goes that no greater friendships and brotherhoods are formed as those forged in training and battle and this reunion confirmed that. It was as if the guys saw each other last week! I could not believe the atmosphere of friendship that prevailed within the first 30 minutes of the reunion! It was really a special feeling!

What strike me the most was how proud these men were to have been part of 61 Mech Bn Gp and of its history. They saw the battalion as one of the elite fighting units of the SADF. One of my old troops

Johan Malan even has the 61 Meg flash tattooed on his forearm.

As it is with this kind of get together the talk quickly turns to the operation and some events during the operation. Here are a few of the most memorable. During our first week at Mavinga Jakes became violently ill. He was submitted to the Rundu Sickbay and the doctors wanted to send him home. He flatly refused and joined us at the transit camp at Rundu a week later from where we flew to Mavinga.

We landed at Mavinga in the pitch-dark, hauled onto Kwêvoels and dropped in soaking rain somewhere in the Angola bush with only our kit. Here we were somewhere in the Angolan bush, its raining, dark as hell with no ammo!

During our training at Mavinga a snake managed to enter one of the Ratels and the crew managed to exit the Ratel at the same time!

Our first taste of war came when the Squadron was tasked to protect the G5 guns. We arrived late the afternoon and were greeted by D30 and MRL salvo's.

Christmas morning, we had a church service. We were sitting behind Jake's Ratel. As soon as the Chaplain said "amen", the first rockets fell in our laager. I have never seen a whole squadron of troops disappeared so quickly! I opted for the trash hole next to the Ratel. I felt very safe between the empty bully and baked bean cans!



The day after Christmas we received the good news that fresh meat is on the way to us. We were looking forward to a nice braai but when the meat arrived it was dark green. We had to bury the whole lot there and then.

Our only casualty for that week came the day after Christmas when trooper Roesch received a piece of shrapnel in his leg courtesy of a FAPLA rocket. The medics stitched him up and he completed the ops. He was also at the reunion.

During any war there are also the unforgettable, sad events and C squadron was not spared. We lost one of our best crew Commanders, L/Cpl Lacauna when a branch of a tree hit him while carrying out an anti-aircraft drill. Troopers Malan and Matthee were the first on the scene where L/Cpl Price was killed in a FAPLA booby trap. They had to carry his body to the ambulance. Our ops medic, Sean Buckley had to treat the wounded of 22C that was shot out and the bodies of the deceased were casavaced in his ambulance.

Our one Ratel 31C hit a landmine. No injuries sustained. And who of 61 Meg can forget the first attack on Tumpo when the Migs flew 53 sorties for the day.

Finally, the men fondly remember the warm beers and the flies!!

Conclusion

Although only 24 members of the Squadron attended the reunion it was a great day and a great success. Friendships were renewed, bonds strengthened and although our country is not what we fought for, the men still believe that their part in the history of an elite unit like 61 Meg, the SADF and the country was worth their while. They feel that the National Service experience influenced their lives for the better and they will do it all over again!

We as C Squadron 61 Mech 87/88 strongly suggest to other Hooper veterans to do the same. It is a life changing experience!



Reaching Out to the Families of our Fallen Brothers

By: Manus Myburgh



Honouring Our Fallen 61 Mech Brothers

61 Mechanised Battalion Group existed for just 27 years, but in that short lifetime it participated in no less than 37 large-scale actions and operations, earning a well-deserved name as one of the finest fighting units in South Africa's military annals. Since then, until 2005 thousands of soldiers entered and exited the gates of this unit, whether it was at Omuthiya, Rooikop or Lohatla. The 61 Mech veterans who served during all these different periods are now united again as members of the 61 Mech Veterans Association where they treasure the history of this unit and commemorate the memory of their fallen brothers with dignity. 105 soldiers lost their lives serving 61 Mech. With the untimely deaths of these soldiers, they were never awarded the coveted 61 Mech 'Yellow Messie'.

The 61 Mech Veterans Association has reached out to all our living Commanding Officers and asked their permission and blessing to reach out to the families of our fallen brothers and present to them their loved ones 'Yellow Messie' posthumous. 61 Mech Veterans Association is the custodians of the 'Yellow Messie'. By doing this we as fellow brothers and veterans acknowledge the role that these brothers of ours has played in the history of 61 Mech. With this presentation we would also like to get the loved ones to join us during our yearly Memorial Services where we commemorate the memory of our fallen brothers. They will never be forgotten!

We have designed a symbolic wooden triangle with the 61 Mech Veterans Association emblem embroidered in gold thread plus an original 'Yellow Messie' below that. This triangle represents the folded flag that is handed to the next of kin during the funeral of a deceased soldier. The members Number, Name, Rank, date of death and in which Operation the member lost his life is engraved at the bottom of the triangle. This gesture is a symbol from the members of the 61 Mech Veterans Association to show their appreciation for or fallen brothers honourable and faithful service to 61 Mechanised Battalion Group and our Country.

We now have a huge task ahead of us. We need our members to assist us in finding the loved ones of our fallen brothers. A list of all the names is mentioned below. We ask that you respect the privacy of the family members by NOT PLACING THE PERSONAL INFORMATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA, but to forward it to our admin email address which is: **admin@61Mech.org.za**

When sending the information through to us, you must give us the names, contact numbers, addresses, relationship, etc. The Exco will then start contacting the loved ones and will make arrangements with them to attend one of our Memorial Services where the Roll of Honour Token will be handed to them.

The 61 Mech Roll of Honour of our fallen brothers are:

Corporal HC Truebody 04 May, 1978 Op Reindeer
Corporal TM Bridgman 04 May, 1978 Op Reindeer
Rifleman SM Cronjé 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Rifleman RN de Vito 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Lieutenant JJ du Toit 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Rifleman JH Fourie 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Rifleman PJ Joubert 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Corporal P Kruger 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Rifleman GJ Kemp 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Rifleman FJ Lello 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Rifleman FJ Loubser 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Rifleman MC Luyt 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Rifleman AJ Madden 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Rifleman GJ Venter 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Rifleman PW Warrener 10 Jun, 1980 Op Sceptic
Corporal JL Potgieter 04 Nov, 1981 Op Daisy
Lieutenant G van Zyl 04 Nov, 1981 Op Daisy
Candidate Officer SF Coetzee 05 Nov, 1981 Op Daisy
Lance Corporal OP Kruger 20 Jan, 1982 -
Lance Corporal P Kruger 20 Jan, 1982 -
Rifleman BJ Wolfaardt 15 Apr, 1982 Op Yahoo
Rifleman M Peterson 15 Apr, 1982 Op Yahoo
Rifleman JH Potgieter 15 Apr, 1982 Op Yahoo
Rifleman LP Hough 15 Apr, 1982 Op Yahoo
Second Lieutenant DR van der Westhuizen 15 Apr, 1982 Op Yahoo
Corporal MJ van Jaarsveld 15 Apr, 1982 Op Yahoo
Lance Corporal JJ van den Berg 15 Apr, 1982 Op Yahoo
Rifleman JDG du Toit 16 Apr, 1982 Op Yahoo
Rifleman GPC Hattingh 20 Apr, 1982 Op Yahoo
Rifleman DP Croeser 30 Jul, 1982 Op Meebos
Gunner CF Bezuidenhout 06 Mar, 1983 Op Phoenix
Gunner J Bosse 06 Mar, 1983 Op Phoenix
Gunner LJ Engelbrecht 02 Apr, 1983 Op Phoenix
Rifleman GC Schönborn 21 Dec, 1983 Op Askari
Trooper NW Niemand 28 Dec, 1983 Op Askari
Rifleman S Pretorius 27 Dec, 1983 Op Askari
Rifleman GP Le Roux 31 Dec, 1983 Op Askari
Rifleman DJ Schrönen 31 Dec, 1983 Op Askari
Rifleman MC Smit 31 Dec, 1983 Op Askari
Rifleman B Geen 04 Jan, 1984 Op Askari
Rifleman HA Heyns 04 Jan, 1984 Op Askari
Rifleman GA Lennox 04 Jan, 1984 Op Askari
Rifleman DA Louw 04 Jan, 1984 Op Askari
Rifleman LF Pearson 04 Jan, 1984 Op Askari
Rifleman PD Pretorius 04 Jan, 1984 Op Askari
Lance Corporal WT Steenkamp 04 Jan, 1984 Op Askari
Rifleman JL Pretorius 04 Jan, 1984 Op Askari
Corporal JH Roets 23 Jan, 1984 Op Askari

Rifleman PA Visagie 16 Sep, 1987 Op Modular
Gunner WG Beukman 20 Sep, 1987 Op Modular
Second Lieutenant AH Hind 03 Oct, 1987 Op Modular
Gunner AW De Villiers 08 Oct, 1987 Op Modular
Trooper F De Jager 08 Oct, 1987 Op Modular
Rifleman PM Schutte 11 Nov, 1987 Op Modular
Lance Corporal MJ Lecuona 03 Feb, 1988 Op Hooper
Corporal JH Kleynhans 14 Feb, 1988 Op Hooper
Rifleman VV Nieuwenhuizen 14 Feb, 1988 Op Hooper
Rifleman AS Groenewald 14 Feb, 1988 Op Hooper
Rifleman PH Groenewald 14 Feb, 1988 Op Hooper
Lance Corporal WAF Price 17 Feb, 1988 Op Hooper
Bombardier C Hendricks 25 Feb, 1988 Op Hooper
Second Lieutenant M Meiring 27 Jun, 1988 Op Excite
Lance Corporal RV Jagga 13 Aug, 1988 -
Lieutenant CP Els 03 Apr, 1989 -
Lance Corporal WL Matwa 17 Apr, 1994 Op Jumbo
Lieutenant J du Toit 10 Apr, 1995 Op Intexo
Rifleman J Mokgatle 21 Jan, 1996 Op Jumbo III
Rifleman NJ Claasen 21 Jan, 1996 Op Jumbo III
Rifleman A Sandi 05 Feb, 1996 Op Jumbo III

The following men lost their lives while serving with 61 Mech

Lance Corporal HL Swart 06 Jun, 1979
Rifleman DG van Brakel 30 Jun, 1979
Rifleman CJ Kotze 11 Aug, 1979
Rifleman BG Bester 22 Aug, 1979
Lance Corporal DJ Evans 11 Jan, 1980
Rifleman CJ Nortje 12 May, 1980
Rifleman PJ Bonnet 01 Jun, 1980
Rifleman JJ Joubert 06 Jul, 1980
Private G Lang 12 Dec, 1980
Rifleman P Hall 01 Mar, 1981
Private JJ Kotze 09 Apr, 1981
Rifleman L van Rooyen 10 Jul, 1981
Private JF De Beer 22 Jan, 1982
Rifleman D De Klerk 25 May, 1982
Rifleman JL van der Merwe 01 Jan, 1983
Lance Corporal CW Kindness 19 May, 1983
Gunner JJ Badenhorst 20 Mar, 1984
Gunner RJ Rautenbach 05 Aug, 1985
Rifleman WR Luiters 09 Aug, 1985
Trooper J Labuschagne 07 Feb, 1987
Lance Corporal G Lamb 27 Aug, 1988
Gunner SC Ellis 16 Sep, 1988
Second Lieutenant PGL Koen 18 Sep, 1988
Rifleman RA Gache 18 Nov, 1989
Lance Corporal SL Mhlongo 14 Dec, 1997
Lieutenant SP Losper 07 Jul, 1999

Our Mechanised Legacy

Sarge Nell 1931-2022

Tony Savides



Johan Tobias Nell was in alle opsigte ‘n ware heer – ‘n navolgenswaardige voorbeeld van ‘n vader, ‘n pa, ‘n oupa, ‘n landsburger en ‘n leier. Sy medewerkers en kollegas by die WNNR het ook die hoogste agting vir Kolonel Doktor Nell gehad, en veral vir die manier waarop hy elkeen waardig hanteer het en nooit sy pos, rang of kwalifikasies misbruik het nie. So ook in sy handel en wandel met die SAW, Krygkor en die militêre nywerheid waar hy deur sy optredes en sy professionaliteit almal se respek en waardering gewen het.

Waar pas die naam - Sarge Nell dan in? “Kolonel” maar ook “Sarge”? Tydens sy vroeër militêre loopbaan by die Potchefstroom Universiteit se Militêre Eenheid was een van sy mede-artilleriste ‘n regte platjie met die naam Roelof Frederik Botha, ook as “Pik” bekend. Pik Botha het min ag op sekere militêre gebruike geslaan nie en het verkies om Sersant Nell as “Sarge” eerder as “Sersant” aan te spreek – en soos dikwels die geval met soldate, het die bynaam bly sit en het Johan Tobias daarna as Sarge bekend gestaan – ongeag sy militêre rang op enige tydstip.

Sarge Nell was one of the unsung “behind-the-scenes” heroes of the SA Army. He managed and led projects that provided the forces with the finest equipment and capabilities – from the Ratel Infantry Combat Vehicle to such mundane items as field dress, underwear and footwear. The list of Sarge’s achievement in this field are too numerous to share here, yet only those who knew him and his role therein, were able to acknowledge these achievements. He was unknown to thousands, yet, when we placed a notice of his passing on several Veterans’ Facebook pages, there were hundreds of likes, acknowledgements and comments, many of which expressed great respect and appreciation, yet also disbelief that this man existed without their knowing of him. He was also the founding commander of Regiment Noord-Transvaal (now the Job Masego Regiment).

Sarge Nell would never take credit for any of his achievements, always deflecting praise to the teams of which he was part. Many, if not most, of the combat soldiers of the SA Army before, during and after the Border War were oblivious to how their equipment came about. They speak almost fondly of the brown uniforms, the Ratel and its variants, and many other items, yet blissfully accepted them as they did most of the stuff the Army provided – like haircuts, food, rifles, helmets, drill, “oppies” and other features of their lives. The roles of the likes of Sarge Nell were unheralded but we hope, in a new book soon to be published, to explain some of this.

Sarge Nell’s contribution did not end in 1994 when the SADF became the SA National Defence Force, for he was active in the development of the new camouflage field dress and several other projects until he formally retired. His most indelible mark though, must surely be his contribution to Ratel, to the field dress and personal combat equipment, to the comfort of soldiers in the field, and to scores of other items.

Die Bravo Komp 1987 Reünie en Lomba Toer

10 tot 25 September 2022



61 Mech did it again!

Chairman 61 MVA Exco - Johan Booysen

In conjunction with the Angolan Government and Veterans in Angola, we had a group of 61 Veterans iwho travelled in September 2022 to the Lomba “Doelwit” from Cuito Cuanavale. This initiative was made possible in negotiations between 61 Exco and Angolan Governmental Officials. General Fernando Mateus and Colonel Tchillulo played an enormous part in it.

Twenty-two headcount - consisting of Veterans, Wives and children travelled on two Kamaz trucks with camping gear to visit this “Doelwit”. The Angolan Government sent Medical personnel, Soldiers and Officers with to ensure the safety of our members. On arrival of the first truck it was found by the Angolans that we South Africans don’t travel light. After a few phonecalls a second truck was sent from Menongue 180 kilometers away. Previous enemy now our best friends!!!!

Rob Torrani has taken charge of the operations in this tour and all we can say is: “Well done Rob!”

We do things the correct way. The safety of our Tour groups is our priority and giving Members the best possible experience that you can get. No money is being made on our ventures. We do it for the members and in finding closure for that piece of you that you left behind.

Every tour done by ourselves, is done hand in hand with our Angolan friends. They go above and beyond to accommodate us and ensure that every trip to Angola is a memorable one.





1987



2018



The ceremony of the hanging of the dog tags was established by Rob Torrani in 2021. The idea is that at every function of Bravo, to hang the dog tags with the names of the members that passed away over the years until present, on a small wooden cross. Platoon 6 / 3 members try get together for a braai at least once a year. We have lost a few brothers over the years so decided to come up with a ceremony to remember them. We had a cross made and made dog tags of all our brothers who are no longer with us. We had a small ceremony and a member of their section then hung their dog tag on the cross and for Bertus Jonker, JP his son did the honors for us. This cross will be at all our gatherings and a few thoughts and words will be done for those brothers who are no longer physically here but live in our group conscience.

Revival

Pl 13 het reeds op 2 Desember 2018 hulle eerste reünie gehou in die Rietvlei Natuur Resevaat te Pretoria.

Robbert Torrani

On the weekend of **20/21 March 2021** I had the privilege of spending the weekend among my brothers I met in 1986 and stuck with me through 1987 too. These are my Bravo Company Brothers, some seeing each other for the first time in 34 years. It took place in the Suikerbosrant, Heidelberg They travelled from all over the country to be there, Cape Town, Hotazel, Bloemfontein, Tzaneen, Lepalale and many more, some even taking the scenic to get there. The commitment to shake a brother by the hand and look him in the eye again makes this a special brotherhood. I know there were also many bitterly disappointed they could not be there, but they were with us in spirit and our stories.





Bravo Coy 1987 - 35 Year Reunion - 2022

Francois Badenhorst
 Corne Botes
 Dewald Botha
 Ronald Brits
 Theuns Cloete
 Gerrie Coetzee
 Willie Crous
 Ernie De Bruin
 Andrew Doubell
 Hercules Du Preez
 Okkie Engelbrecht
 Johan Erasmus
 Deon Ferreira
 Riaan Fourie
 Hugo Gerrits
 Willem Grobler
 Pieter Henderson
 Danie Heunis
 Piet Janse Van Rensburg
 Marius Jonker
 Dennis Kemp
 Johan Kense
 Herman Kleynhans

Johan Kooij
 Fanie Le Roux
 Dawid Lotter
 Dawid Momberg
 Arrie Mooiman
 Stelios Moraitis
 Gert Muller
 Kobus Naude
 Chris Odendaal
 Andrew Oosthuizen
 Fanus Pieters
 Johan Pretorius
 Eben Pretorius
 Nico Pretorius
 Andries Schreuder
 Warren Sheridan
 Ben Smit
 Michiel Smit
 Louis Smit
 Phillip Smuts
 Barry Snyman
 Steven Steyn
 Clifton Sudano

Kobus Swanepoel
 Robert Torrani
 Andre Treurnich
 Willie Uys
 Klaas Van Aswegen
 Steve Van Der Merwe
 Dreyer Van Niekerk
 JJ (KG) Van Niekerk
 Nico Van Rooyen
 Lukas Van Vuuren
 Roelof Van Wyk
 Gert Vermaak
 Jan Visagie
 Ralph Wissner
 Willem Jordaan
 *
 Bok Smit
 Johan Booysen
 Jaap Steyn
 Fanus Hansen
 Jan Vorster
 Johnny Bateman



Oorsig

Op 10 September 2022 het sowat drie en sestig van Bravo Kompanie (1987) van 61 Meg Bn Gp na lang vooraf beplanning by NAMPO buite Bothaville in die Vrystaat saamgetrek. Daar was vorige kleiner samekomste oor die voorafgaande dekade, maar hierdie een was groot en het saamgeval met die 35 jarige onthou van ons bydrae tydens Op Modular. Dit was ook die vertrekplek vir die lankbeplande Bravo 1987 toer na die slagvelde van Ops Modular aan die Lomba. Die 61 MVV is al vanaf 2009 bedrywig om 61'ners op slagveld toere te fasaliteer. Hierdie toer sou in vele opsigte uniek wees. Hieroor meer later in die artikel.

Die spesiale gasspreker vir die geleentheid was die destydse 61 Meg Bn Gp Bevelvoerder Kmdt Bokkie Smit. Onder die eregaste was die 61 MVV Voorsitter - Johan Booysen, Jaap Steyn, Johnny Bateman. Die 61 MVV Kapelaan Ds Fanus Hansen het die geestelike sy gehanteer. Van die veteraan het hul vrouens en kinders saamgebring en die totale opkoms was 106 siele.

Die lede het reeds op **9 September** van heinde en ver by die Nampo terrein begin aankom. Daar was gaste akkomodasie beskikbaar vir die wat meer gemaklik wou slaap. Dan was daar ook kampplek vir die wat in hulle tente wou slaap.





10 September 2022

Andries Schreuder

Saterdag 10 September was die reünie en dit was lekker om al die ou gesigte te sien, Ek het veral Kmdt Smit se toespraak en detail geniet, hy was maar 32 jaar oud en die Staandemag lede was lank weg van hul families.....net soos ons. Nog 'n hoogtepunt was om Dawid Lotter weer te sien, dankie dat jy daar was.

Ek was redelik apaties oor die jare in terme van die Weermag. Baie daarvan was gebaseer op my opinie en wanopvattinge. Daarom respekteer ek enige persoon wie se mening met my sou verskil want as mens is ons komplekse wesens en nie almal ervaar alles in dieselfde manier nie. Nog minder is ons op dieselfde fase van ons lewens. Die dinge neem sy verloop en ek is daarom dankbaar dat ek die reünies van 2021 en 2022 bygewoon het asook die toer na die Lomba.

Al die leiers van 61 Meg verdien 'n DANKIE. Na Kmdt Smit se toespraak besef ek hoe professioneel

julle was, julle het ons veiligheid altyd eerste gestel want veral in Angola moes julle "Pretoria" vele kere teen gestaan het.....want julle motto was minimum lewensverlies. Baie dinge maak nou sin, hoe julle ons gedissiplineer het, laat oefen het, die hoë vereistes gestel aan die leierskorps by Bravo en professionalisme. Alles was gefokus dat ons slag gereed is vir die dag as die eerste skote klap en die bomme val.





Special Performance by Sharron Bateman



The Lomba Battle song

ARTIST: SHARRON BATEMAN(TAU EA TAU)
MUSIC: DON MCLEAN
LYRICS: SHARRON BATEMAN
PHOTOGRAPHY: LEN ROBERTS
FOOTAGE: JOURNEYMAN PICTURES
PRODUCTION: KERYN BATEMAN

Die Oorsprong van “Die Lomba Battle Song” Sharron Bateman

In my jonger jare as ‘n kind het my Pa nooit regtig gepraat oor die Suid-Afrikaanse Grensoorlog nie, en natuurlik is ons nie in skool oor die ware gebeure van die oorlog onderrig nie. Dit was net tot ‘n paar jaar gelede dat my Pa regtig meer vrylik begin praat het oor hul ervaring. Ek was baie geboei en soort van geobsedeer oor die Grensoorlog, en Covid-19 het die perfekte geleentheid geskep om die gebeure van meer spesifiek 61 Meg en Operasie Modular in 1987 te ondersoek. Na ‘n geselsie met my pa een dag, het hy vir my verduidelik dat die lied “Starry Starry Night” hom altyd aan die Groot Slag op 3 Oktober 1987 op die Lomba-rivier herinner het.

Sy verduideliking aan my was dat die nag voor die 61 Meg geveg, het hy en sy bemanning onder hul Ratel gelê het en na ‘n radiostasie genaamd Orion geluister het, wat deur Robin Alexander aangebied was, en die liedjie toe deur die lugtogte gespeel is en in sy kop bly hang het. Met ‘n passie vir sing en musiek het ek besluit om die lirieke van “Starry Starry Night” te herskryf om die gebeure van 3 Oktober 1987 aan te vul en hom te verras met ‘n Vaderdag-geskenk. Ek het toe op ‘n soektog gegaan om soveel moontlike inligting oor die gebeure van 3 Oktober 1987 in te samel om die storie in die liedjie te vertel. Die soektog na inligting het gelei tot baie dae en nagte vol trane, waar ek besef het nie net die prestasie nie, maar die impak wat hierdie dag op baie jong seuns se lewens gehad het.

Die hooflyn van die storie beskryf jong seuns met relatief jong bevelvoerders wat die bykans onmoontlike bereik het, en ook hoe jong seuns binne die ruimte van 24 uur mans geword het en moes leer om die nagevolge van oorlog te hanteer, en tog vandag nog nie erkenning gekry het nie. Ek moet beklemtoon dat hoewel hierdie lied oor die gebeure van 3 Oktober 1987 gaan, dit besluit toegewy is aan elke veteraan soldaat asook vyandelike soldate wat die uiterste opoffering moes bring en ook met die nagevolge van oorlog moes leer omgaan. Ter voltooiing is my uiteindelijke doel met hierdie liedjie om aandag aan die wêreld te gee dat die Suid-Afrikaanse Grensoorlog wel gebeur het.



Johnny Bateman

Dankie Bravo.

Wat ‘n voorreg om saam met die manne van Bravo komp te kon gekuier het. Robert, thanks for all the excellent arrangements and for honoring my family and me with the special invite. Dit was regtig ‘n groot eer om tussen GROOT MANNE te kon gesit het. Dit het my heeltemal ontnugter toe ek besef ek sit in die geselskap van regte egte Suid Afrikaanse legendes, dit was vir my n groot eer om met Bok Smit, Dawid Lotter en Jaap Steyn ‘n bietjie te kon gesels het. My jongste dogter het die dag perfek beskryf toe sy op pad terug huiستoe sê: “Dad this was a most satisfying experience”.





The Lomba Battle Song - Lyrics

Starry starry night
They marched on through the grey and blue
Looked out on a summer's day
With eyes that know the darkness in their soul
Shadows in the trees
Sketched the tanks and enemy
Caught the fear of what could be
Lay hidden in the forest land

Now I understand
What you tried to say to me
And how you suffered for your sanity
And how you tried to set them free
We would not listen, we did not know how
Perhaps we'll listen now

Stormy stormy day
Flaming guns that brightly blaze
Swirling clouds of gun smoke haze
Reflect in Adrian's eyes of China blue
Young lives changed forever gloom
Ultimate prices paid
Weathered faces lined in pain
Is all that's left for them to bare

Now I understand
What you tried to say to me
And how you suffered for your sanity
And how you tried to set them free
We would not listen, we did not know how
Perhaps we'll listen now

For they could not love you
But still your love was true
And when the hope was left in sight
On that stormy stormy day
You gave your life as soldiers Often do
But I Could've told you, Adrian,
This world was never meant for one as beautiful as you

Starry starry night
No portraits hung in halls of fame
Nameless heads on nameless walls
That bore brunt of this bloody war
Like strangers never met
These ragged boys in ragged clothes
Their lives in a bloody mess
Lie crushed and broken on this marshy floor



© Sharron Bateman

Verkorte weergawe van *Roané Snyman* se verhaal oor die Bravo 35 jaar reünie en die daaropvolgende toer na die slagveld aan die Lomba (Modular 1987).

Opgedra aan Pappa Johan Pretorius.

Hierdie is 'n gedagte-wêreld van 'n meisie wat toer na Angola. Die Lomba toer waar die 61 Meg Bravo Kompanie teen Fapla, 35 jaar gelede geveg het. Dit is nie geskryf vir feite of historiese gebeure nie. Hierdie is 'n hart vol emosie neergepen in dankbaarheid en trots. Hierdie is 15 dae se gebeure uit my perspektief as 'n "Born of 61" meisiekind wat haar Pa nog altyd sien as haar held.

"Op Soek na jou Held se Voetspore".

Stories

Ek was in die Hoërskool toe ek sy weermag foto's in die kas vind. Ek onthou hoe die een my heeltemal verwonder het, dis my pa en nog twee seuns. Ek bedoel seuns, want hierdie jong gesigte was verseker nog nie manne nie. Hulle swem, maar daar is 'n skerpheid in my pa se oë en 'n erns op sy gesig. Ek het Pappa met vrae oorval. Hy het geduldig geantwoord.

Dis Cool, hoe oud was Pappa?" rol die vrae weer uit. "19, dink ek" die ligte fronsie verander in 'n glimlag soos ek styf langs hom gaan sit en saam kyk. "Dit is Cool, sê jy?" vra hy nou laggend.

Dit was die begin, die begin van die stories. Ek was veertien jaar oud maar daardie gesprek met hom sal ek nooit vergeet nie. Hierdie was 'n tydperk in my pa se lewe wat hom vir altyd sou verander. Hierdie was iets waaroor hy geen beheer of keuse gehad het nie. Hierdie was die oorsaak van 'n kort humeur, kwaai en gefrustreerde man, maar ook die karakter van 'n hardwerkende, lojale Pa.

Soos die stories, seremonies, mense en foto's oor die jare meer geword het en makliker gedeel was, so ook het my emosies rondom my pa se weermag verhale gevorder vanaf "cool" na bewondering, kwaad, gefrustreerd, respek en ongelooflike trots! Trots in my geboorte van, trots in my ouers en dit wat hulle deur gemaak het, trots om hom te ken, trots om sy dogter te wees. Trots op hom, vir dit wat hy oorkom het.

9 September 2022

Die dag het aangebreek! Vandag vlieg ek van King

Shaka Lughawe in Durban na Lanseria aan die Rand. Hoe geseënd is ek nie?! My man gun my die ervaring van 'n leeftyd! 'n toer na Angola, 'n toer na die Lomba, die plek waar my Pa, my held, my eerste liefde - geveg het vir 61 Meg Bn Gp in Bravo Komp in Ratel 23C.

23 Charlie! Ek glimlag altyd as ek hom dit hoor sê. Soos ek teen die tyd al goed ontsyfer het, was die jong manne in Ratel 23C nie van die soetste nie. My pa lag altyd as hy my vertel hoe Majoor op hulle gegil het. Hy vertel watter stout gat oom Vann, hulle Ratel drywer was. Ek onthou toe ek hom ontmoet het vir die eerste keer, "hy's steeds 'n stout gat" het ek gedink toe hy so skuins vir my pa glimlag en sê "Pretoors!"

10 September 2022

Legendes by Nampo

Dit was nogal intimiderend om in 'n generasie van helde in te stap. Wanneer jy verby hierdie ooms in Checkers sous tap, sal jou eerste gedagte nie wees dat jy verby 'n troep stap nie. Die jare wys nou op hulle gesigte, en die elke dag oorlog wat ons almal moet veg het dalk al hier en daar 'n dag of twee gewen. Maar wanneer jy so in 'n vertrek inloop, waar hulle met trots hulle Bravo Kompanie hemde dra, mekaar groet asof hulle gister nog agtien jaar oud was. Soos hulle begin stories vertel en details onthou, kan jy nie help om die "hierdie is my broers" atmosfeer te voel nie.

Ten spyte van wat voor of na die Lomba geveg gebeur het, hierdie groep mense, verstaan mekaar op 'n vlak wat werklik geestelik moet wees. My pa sê altyd hy kan dit nie beskryf nie. Ek blameer hom ook nie, hoe

sit jy so iets in woorde. ‘n Begrip, ‘n verstaan, ‘n konneksie wat werklik net daar in jou binneste groei. Die saadjie was so intens geplant, dat die rankplant teen die tyd in elke deel van jou menswees kan blom. Dis vreemd vir my, maar beeldskoon. Dit wat hulle bereik het, is beeldskoon. Ek praat nie noodwendig van die oorlog nie, maar van die menswees wat besluit het om daarna, steeds te leef.

Ek klim uit my gedagtes uit soos ek langs my ma aan tafel sit en luister na stories van die vroue wat met hierdie rowwe diamante moet huis hou. Ek gaan haal my 61 Meg boek wat my pa vir my geskenk gegee het. Ek het beplan om die manne te vra om dit vir my te teken. My pa moes natuurlik eerste teken, vir my bly hy die hoof karakter.

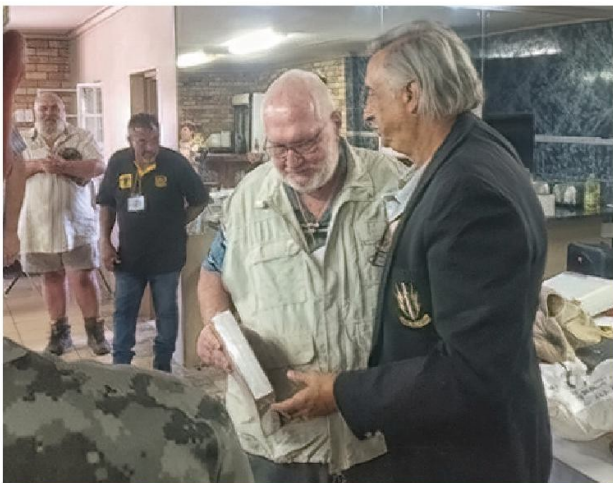
Dan, moet ek moed by mekaar skraap om die skrywer homself te gaan vra. Majoor Dawid Lotter. My hande het gebewe en ek het vreeslik gebabbel. Dis vreemd. Ek het nog net stories gehoor, hoe streng hy was, hoe erg hy was, maar ook hoe dit aan hom te danke aan was dat hulle lewendig daar weg gekom het. Hier staan die ou oom met wit baard voor my. Ek het sy stories gelees, daaroor het ek groot respek. Maar om my pa te hoor praat van iemand met soveel gesag, hy het steeds, soveel respek, dis wat van hom vir my ‘n legende maak.

Later die middag begin die formele verrigtinge en soos altyd word die “gone but never forgotten” dog tags van troepe oor die kruis gehang. My Pa hang JB Pieterse sin, hy was ook ‘n Skutter. Ek is so ongelooflik trots en vol vreugde, want die dag as Johan Pretorius se dog tag oor die kruis geplaas sal word, weet ek waar hy sal wees. My pa het nog altyd baie vriende, maar God is verseker sy beste een.

Kommandant Bok Smit se toespraak begin en hy gee vir ons so bietjie agtergrond, waar hy vandaan kom en wat met hom gebeur het. Wat sy rol was en wat die doel van die operasie was. “Hy klink net soos op die videos” het ek by myself gedink, weereens bietjie “star struck”. Hy vertel van die strategie agter die operasies en deel staaltjies oor die opleiding. Hoe hy voor sy troepe gestaan het en hulle met sy lewe vertrou het, nes hulle hom moes vertrou het met hulle lewens. Hy vertel ook die storie van die oomblik waar hy besef het “Ons het gewen”. “Dit was ‘n bebosde area” verduidelik hy “en vir die volgende 1200 meter was daar niks, tot by die volgende bebosde area, dis ‘n oop ruimte en hier en daar sal jy ‘n klein boompie sien.” (Dit was die vloekvlakte waarna hy verwys en hy vertel dat die 47ste Brigade hulself op ‘n punt bevind het, waar hulle besef het, die enigste kans vir oorlewing is om hul wapens te los en te hardloop) My hart sink en my kop is oorvol. Besef hierdie mense wat die ‘man vir hulle sê? Hoor hulle die punte wat uitgelig word deur hulle Kommandant? Eerstens, julle het gewen! Die doelwit is bereik. Jy is suksesvol! Tweedens, daar is ‘n verskil tussen oorlog en moord! Besef julle 35 jaar later, dat dit alles okay is? Julle is nie slegte mense wat verkeerde dinge gedoen het nie. Julle was soldate wat dood eenvoudig ‘n opdrag uitgevoer het en ‘n doel bereik het.

Kommandant vertel verder en verduidelik die onnodige en belaglike politiek na die Lomba gevegte. Hy was self kwaad omdat die militêre doel nou verander het en het in opstand gekom daarmee. Hy verduidelik dat 61 Meg na die geveg, “grootkop” gekry het, en dat dit hulle ondergang was na 1987.

Ek kyk op na my pa wat hier langs my sit, môre begin ons met die toer na die Lomba. My trane lê reeds vlak, maar ek kan nie wag om die voetspore van my held te verken nie.





Die Begin van die Avontuur

11 September 2022

20 Mense, 9 voertuie vertrek vanaf die Nampo gronde. Daar is opgewondenheid in die lug. By ons eerste stop het ons 'n vinnige groet en ontmoet, die manne klets klaar asof hulle die 1ste rugby span op toer is, maar vir ons girls is hierdie eerste ontmoeting baie belangrik. Jy weet, vir die volgende 2 weke gaan hierdie vroue jou beter ken as wat meeste van jou familieleden jou ken. Dis hulle wat jou gaan sien met vuil deurmekaar hare, sonder “make up” en dood moeg. Dis hulle wat jou gaan aanwys na die grootste naaste bossie om gou 'n veldjie te vang. Dis hulle wat met jou gaan toilet papier deel en jou gemoed gaan hoog hou. Tussen die “band of brothers”, moes ons gou 'n “cheerleader supporting group” stig.

So kom ons by die Botswana grenspos aan. Daar moet elkeen hul skoene af vee aan 'n nat matjie. Die matjie lyk soos 'n ou vuil bruin kombersie wat iemand gister ontdek het uit Noag se ark, steeds nat van al die vloed water. Ons giggel oor die nuttigheid wat werklik geen doel het of sin dra nie want jou skoene is vuiler na die af vee. Tog, laat dit my dink aan die groot koppe, die regering, President en wie ook al die besluite geneem het 35 jaar terug. Hierdie mense wat opdragte uit gedeel het en daarna hulle hande so gerieflik in onskuld af gegee het. Ek verbeel my die mens, in pak gekleë, sy hande was met 'n lappie wat lyk net soos die vuil matjie, maak nie saak hoe jy vee, vryf of skrop nie, dit word net vuiler. In my gedagtes sê ek aan hulle: “Hoe ek wens jy kon hierdie manne sien vandag, my pa ontmoet. Hoe ek wens jy, wie jy ookal was kon dié toer saam met ons aanpak... want dalk, net dalk as jy toe geweet het wat jy nou weet, sou jou bevele dalk anders geklink het.”

Ons arriveer in Kang, Botswana net voor die son heeltemal sak. Daar by die Ultra Stop garage is 'n hotel en kampeer plek. Ons besluit om in te boek,



en trek laer onder die boompies. Daar is klein badkamertjies, so ons kan warm stort en lekker slaap. Die vreugde dat ons nog nie 'n veldjie hoef te vang nie is groot en sommer net lekker. “Ooo jipeee, ek kan lekker sit en piepie” hoor ek my ma giggel en geniet haar vreugde in die oomblik.

Die aand om die vuur gesels die groep en oom Herman sluit die eerste dag lekker af soos hy vir ons elkeen 'n shot glasie bring, met iets wat verseker jou asem weg slaan. “Cheers op 35 jaar later en ons gaan wragtig terug”, lag hy. “Cheers” sing ons in 'n koor.





12 September



Ons vertrek vroeg uit Kang en gaan oor die Botswana grens Namibia binne. In Tsumeb besoek ons die Minen Hotel. Ons kry die geleentheid om ietsie te drink, en ek word vertel dat die jong manne soms hierheen gekom het as hul kon, om aankope te doen en natuurlik ietsie te kom drink en sosiaal te wees. Pappa vertel dat dit die groot koppe was wat hier heen gekom het, hulle het 'n ander "local – hotel" besoek. Maar daar in die kroeg area van die Mine Hotel, is 'n 61 Meg plaatjie 2 bekere en ons sit ons vlaggie ook by. Ons besoek ook die Otjikoto meer en die Hoba meteoriet.

Dit raak laat en ons sien die son al hoe vinniger sak. Die groep trek af langs die pad vir een van die bekende "Vroue links, Mans regs" -piepie geleenthede en Oom Johan Kooi ry in by die plaas wat behoort aan Gert & Ina Steyn, so sê die bordjie en ons wag om te hoor of die ons volgende kamp plek sal wees, iets waarvoor almal hoop, omdat die manne nou al moeg gery is en dit nog vroeg genoeg is om saam 'n lekker vuur aan te steek. Terwyl ons wag, tempteer oom Herman en die mannetjies volstruis mekaar, elk spog dans aan sy kant van die heining. Die lag word sommer nog meer toe ons hoor ons kan in die volstruis kamp gaan oornag.

Almal trek in en begin tent opslaan, ek sukkel met die drone wat ons saam gebring het, en na hy die tweede keer op die grond val en ons hom uit die doringboom moes haal, sit ek hom liever weg. Die son begin nou verdwyn en tot my verbasing, kom die groep nie by mekaar nie, maar vorm so twee of drie kleiner groepies wat elk hul eie ding doen. Dit moes my seker nie verbaas nie, want daar is 'n onderliggende "Skool-kamp" gevoel aan die toer.

Ons begin die dag vroeg. Oom Ockie speel weer die liedjie van Calum Scott, "Rise" soos hy elke oggend doen. Ek dink dis die mees toepaslike liedjie vir die toer!





*For every valley, there's a mountain
For every answer, there's a new question
Is it worth all this?
I'm pushing myself to the edge*

*'Cause we're all looking for a reason
Find a shelter from the storm within
Just keep your eyes ahead
And dust yourself off again*

13 September

Oshikango

Ons arriveer by die grenspos van Angola. Soos ons uit Namibië ry, verbaas die luukse, skoon en amper tronk-agtige groot grys gebou my. Die gebou is nuut, mooi, luuks, hoog, goed in stand gehou en nogal intimiderend. Tog, die mense wat daar wag om groente en vrugte te kry lyk vervaal, arm, kaalvoet en kyk ons aan met oë wat weet jy is nie van hier af nie. Van rykdom tot brand arm in 'n oomblik, dis 'n A tot Z Angola.

Die weermag manne wat ons hier ontvang, is nie gekleë in uniform nie. Ekhet eers gedink dis vreemdelinge wat so in ons persoonlike spasie kom inklim.

Totdat die tolk woorde vertaal wat min of meer soos reëlins klink. Ons word gesê om in die ' groot gebou in te gaan, nadat daar foto's van elke bakkie, waentjie, nommer plaat en lisensie skyfie geneem is. Elke papier vyf keer bestudeer is en elke gesig bevestig is deur die voorman. Ons word bekyk, veral Marizaan met haar pragtige blonde hare. "Dis seker baie vreemd vir hulle" sê een van die dames. Ek bekyk die vroue met swaar gelaai mandjies op hulle koppe en jong babas op hulle heupe self vreemd aan. - Hulle is 'n ander tipe sterk-, besluit ek.

Binne die grys gebou staan ons in 'n lang ry en neem dan fotos. Ons wag seker nog vier ure voor ons uiteindelik in die voertuie klim. Ons ruil geld by die grenspos terwyl ons wag dat al die papier werk goedgekeur word.



Ons moet nou aan die regterkant van die pad ry. Dit voel bietjie vreemd. “Pappa is pa seker hierdie is nie ‘n Piet Retief situasie nie? Pa weet, die hele lokval, maak jou dood ding.” ek kan sien my ma vermoed vreesend die selfde soos haar groot blou oë ook vir hom kyk, soekend na veiligheid in sy woorde.

Hy lag so bietjie voor hy antwoord, “Nee my kind, jy sal sien, hierdie mense dra ons op hulle hande, kyk die weermag ry voor ons, onthou alles is vooraf gereël vir ons.”

“Daar is ‘n tekort aan diesel, kyk hoe staan hulle in rye. Maar ons ry net verby, want die weermag het vir ons so’ gereël. Hier los jy jou kar oop, met alles daar in, selfoon, beursie, alles, en hulle sal niks vat nie, hulle sal kyk maar niks vat nie. As jy hier steel, kap hulle jou hand af.” Sy woorde stel ons gerus, maar ons ontspan eers toe ons die’ situasie beleef by die petrol stasie.

Ons almal kry brandstof, die son sak nou al en dis laat skemer, dan ry ons deur die dorp, agter die voorman aan oppad na ons slaap area toe, of so het ek gedink. Ek kan dit nie glo nie, vir ‘n stad met so veel mense, is dit vreeslik skoon, behalwe vir dit, die hele hoofweg is verlig met straat ligte, solar - straat ligte. Dit is modern en mooi en netjies en in stand gehou.

In Suid Afrika het ek seker hele strate met werkende ligte gesien toe ek 7 jaar oud was, dit was in 2002. “Hulle sal sonpale by ons steel” sê my ma. “Ek dog Angola is ‘n arm land” sê ek heeltemal onkant gevang. “Nee” glimlag my pa, trots op ons verbasing, “Angola het groot olie myne, van die grootstes in die wêreld, julle sal sien, die land is ryk, die regering en die hoë mense, maar die volk, die mense, het niks.”



Ons ry toe nie dadelik na ons slaap plek nie, maar eers om een of ander belangrike persoon te ontmoet. Ons stop en wag vir ‘n hele ruk. Ons hoor dat die reeling verander het. Niemand weet regtig wat aangaan nie, almal is moeg, maar gelukkig om in Angola te wees. Die manne kon dalk ‘n oorlog wen maar hulle kommunikasie vaardighede is vreeslik swak, dink ek by myself.

Ons ry weer terug van die kant af waarvandaan ons gekom het, bewonder weer die straat ligte en skoon paaie en arriveer uiteindelik in die pik donker by ons slaap plek. Die grond pad hierheen was erg. Ek het geen idee waar ek is nie, die grond is sanderig en vol dorings. Ons trek weer in ‘n laer en slaan kamp op. Almal maak gou vinnig aand ete en gaan bed toe.

14 September

Oogies Vallei

Vroegoggend is ons op, en daar is niks beter as daai koppie koffie nie, maar vanoggend het die manne vir ons die stort aan mekaar geslaan en ek en my moeder-tjie was nog nooit so in ons noppies met ‘n vinnige was nie. Ons weet steeds nie waar ons is nie, maar ons sien in die daglig dat ons nie te ver van ‘n paar “local” huisies af bly nie en arme Ruan se privaatheid in die veld word toe somer heeltemal bietjie minder privaat.

Cassinga

Vanoggend stop ons by ‘n area waar die aanval op van ons mense na my pa-hulle nogal sleg uitgedraai het. Die geboue vertel ‘n storie van oorlog. Jy kan sien hoe dit geskiet was soos dit tussen mens en koeël gestaan het. Die’ lyk werklik soos ‘n film. Ek raak met my vingerpunte aan die mure en kry hoedervleis oor die stories wat die stene kan vertel. ‘n Entjie verder sien ons ook ‘n bom gat. As ek reg verstaan, was die bom op die



verkeerde plek vry gelaat en het dit ons meer skade aan gerig as goed. “Niemand wen met oorlog nie” klink die woorde weer in my gedagtes op. Ons besoek ook die plaatjie wat 61, hier onder die boom opgerig vir die onthou van die mense.

Ek kan nie help om te wonder wat ek sal doen as oorlog nou in my land uitbreek nie. Ek weet nie hoe ek sal reageer nie. My alter ego sal natuurlik nie ‘n bang haar op haar lyf hê nie, maar dis net fiksie. My hart sal vrees vir my mense en ek besef weer dat die Here die enigste wen is. My land voel reeds soos ‘n oorlogs veld en my enigste wapen is gebed. “Kom red ons Here, asb” bid ek in my hart soos ek kyk na die bom gat in die grond.

Die Avontuur onderweg na Menongue

Die plan is om vandag vanaf Casinga tot by Menongue te ry. Die pad was wel glad nie regtig pad nie. Ons verloor vroeg dag die agterste linker wiel van die bakkie, na ons op, om en langs ‘n pad gery het, wat blykbaar nog pad moet word. Die groot skerp klippe moes die wiel gesny het, want dit is heeltemal vlenters. Hierdie is al die derde wiel wat bietjie hulp nodig het op die toer, maar dis die eerste een wat nie net ‘n “plug” nodig het nie. ‘n Paar manne klap saam en 1-2-3 is die wiel geruil. Ek vermoed as hulle saam kon oorlog voer kan hulle saam ‘n wiel ruil.

Die pad raak nie beter nie, en ek is nou 100% oortuig dat die nie ‘n pad is nie. My pa is bekommerd oor die spaar wiel, want ons het net die een. Oom Rob kry die details van die wiel oor die radio (toe hulle weer in opvangs afstand was) en reël solank vir ‘n spaar wiel in die volgende dorp. Ons moet net daar uitkom. Ons ry lank en vêr. Ek sit weer voor langs hom en gesels oor alles onder die son. Mamma vat ‘n rus kansie. Dis

‘n stewige opdraande wat ons nou uitklim, na ons so bietjie verdwaal het en toe oor die riviértjie gery het, almal heel in bewondering met die klein motorfietsies wat so maklik hier tussen die grasdak huisies deur ry.

Ons klim die skuinste uit en dan hoor ons dit, “Pppfffttt” - dis die spaar wiel. My Pa trek handbriek op en klim uit, dis presies waarvoor ek bang was, nou is ons gestrand. “Agge, nee” laat sak my ma haar kop in haar hande. “Ek laat weet op die radio, dat ons weer ‘n pap wiel het, en nou nie verder kan ry nie” Oom Johan Kooi laat weet dat hy en oom Cornie so lank aan ry, oom Rob reël ‘n wiel. Die konvooi agter ons stop almal en besluit om daar by ons te bly. Die ding is, ons Pretorius motor is die enigste Volkswagen Bakkie tussen die ander Toyota’s en Land Cruisers, dit beteken dat ons wile heeltemal anders is as die ander, daarom kan ons ook nie ‘n spaarwiel leen nie.

Die groep besluit om by ons te bly, Oom Oekie, besef dat Pappa nou negatief is en dat hy tot redding sal moet kom. Hy sal ry tot in die naaste dorp en die wiel kry en terug bring. Oom Herman, haak ons sleepwa en ry saam, hulle moet minstens 2 voertuie by mekaar bly. Ons weet nie hoe ver die dorp is nie en het nou geen kontak met die res van die groep nie. Dis Oom Theuns en sy vrou, tannie Erika wat my gemoed lig met hul positiewe uitkyk en vreugde in avontuur. Hy is reg om te braai en gooi dadelik ietsie koud in sy glas. Die gemeenskap rondom ons is groot en daar is weer ‘n 100 paar ogies wat ons fyn dop hou, van elke kant. Hulle staan almal daar, groot - klein, jonk - oud, man- vrou.

“Dis bietjie scary” sê ek bekommerd. “Nee wat” sê tannie Erica, hulle sal jou niks maak nie. “Julle moet verstaan” verduidelik ek. “Julle maak ons groot, om altyd bewus te wees van wat om ons aangaan, ons word groot in ‘n land waar jy onveilig voel om alleen te wees, nou bring julle ons hier in Donker Afrika in, hier in die middel van ogies vallei, met 1000 vreemdes om ons en sê, moet nie worry nie. Verstaan julle dat my brein nie so werk nie? Dit maak mos nie sin nie” Verklaar ek my stand punt heel dramaties. Die ouer generasie, lag maar skud tog hulle koppe in ooreenstemming. Die ogies hou ons elke beweging dop, maar kom nooit nader as ‘n meter nie. Hulle na-aap ons lyf taal en klanke en lag dan van plesier.

Ons besef dat die wiel nie vandag hier gaan uitkom nie en maak vuur. Dis hier waar ek die eerste keer werklik vir Oom Willie, Andries, Gerrie en Lukas



ervaar. Oom Willie en Andries is seker die twee snaakste mense wat ek al ooit ontmoet het. Hulle vermaak ons met stories van alles wat hulle in hulle bakkie aanvang en stories van hulle lewens en vroue by die huis. Ek het jare laas my moedertjie so lekker hoor lag. Oom Gerrie is vir seker die geduldigste, hy probeer skool gee vir die Angoliaanse kindertjies en ondersoek elke takkie en blaartjie. Oom Lukas is nie gemaak vir 'n gehoor nie en die honderde oogies wat steeds reg rondom ons staan, irriteer die wit waks uit hom uit. Dit maak dit natuurlik soveel snaakser soos hy sy stoel elke keer omdraai, net om nog oogies aan die ander kant te sien. Ek en Dorita (Cloete), gesels lekker en dis 'n verligting om te weet daar is nog dogters daar buite van die 61 Meg wat omgee oor hul ouers se stories, die stories voor ons tyd.

Later die aand gaan slaap ons almal in ons motors, omdat ons moet, ons opslaan wa-tent is weg saam met oom Herman en ons slaap min en ongemaklik. Die ander mense slaap daar in oogies vallei by ons, dood eenvoudig omdat hulle gekies het om dit te doen. Die vreeslike aaklige pad, pap wiel dag, draai om in een van die lekkerste aande nog. Hierdie mense is so spesiaal en ek hoop hulle weet dat ek die 'dag en hulle vir altyd sal onthou.

15 September

Dit was 'n vreeslike lang, ongemaklike en vreemde nag. Ek wag lank vir die son om lig oor die donker aand te kom gooi, net om uit te klim. Ons moes dood stil sit deur die nag want die bakkie staan op 'n as wat met een groot rowwe beweging kan afval en daarvoor het niemand krag of geduld nie. Ek en mamma lief het kort-kort geruil deur die nag op die agterste sit plek, dan lê sy op my skoot en dan ek op hare. Oom André moes ook by ons inklim want sy sitplek is weg saam met Oom Ockie. Maar dis my pa wat die swaarste trek. Hy lê vooroor die stuurwiel en dan met sy kop agtertoe en dan weer vorentoe. Ek is 100% oortuig dat hy niks geslaap het nie. Ek het aangebied dat ons plekke ruil, maar hy wou niks weet nie. Ek weet nie of hy bedagsaam of hardkoppig is nie, maar dis hoe ek hom nog altyd ken. Hy sal altyd seker maak dat ons okay is, maak nie saak wat dit van hom vra nie.

Kort voor lank juig ons almal van vreugde soos ons Oom Ockie se motor sien aankom. Natuurlik klim hy uit met sy breë glimlag en my Pa omhels die man sommer. "My hero" giggel-sê my ma weer. Shame, die arme mense het tot 2 uur die oggend probeer planne

maak en rond gery vir ons. Hy en Oom Rob verduidelik dat hulle regtig alles probeer het, maar die pad na die naaste dorp is nog ver en hulle moes baie toutjies trek om die wiel te kry. Ek is dankbaar dat hulle regtig probeer het om ons so gou as moontlik te kom haal. Mens weet nie altyd waardeur die ander mense op wie jy wag gaan nie, dink ek, ons kyk so maklik in ons eie omstandighede vas, jy vergeet soms dat almal hulle eie "battles fight".

Nou het ons weer 'n wiel en sommer nog 'n spaar een ook. Ons is almal oppad na Menongue, waar ons die vorige nag by Stefan van Wyk in luuksheid moes oornag. Ons is verlig toe ons laat oggend daar aankom, want ons weet dat ons die geleentheid sal hê om te stort. Maar die groot 5-ster kamers met lug versorgers en wit linne laat my verbaas. Die plek is soos 'n oase in die woestyn. Dit sou darem maar lekker gewees het as ons ook die nag hier kon deur bring. Ons sou ook so mooi en vars en uit gerus gelyk het soos die wat wel hier oornag het, dink ek so bietjie jaloers.

Ons shower lekker, kry ietsie om te eet en pak dan weer in. Marizaan (Kleynhans) wat amper-amper gearresteer was deur die Angoliaanse Polisie omdat sy hulle afgeneem het is die storie van die oggend en ons is bly toe sy daar opdaag. "Ek het die gebou afgeneem, hulle was net toevallig ook in die foto" verduidelik sy, "maar ek neem nou sommer glad nie meer fotos nie, sê sy half benoud en half ernstig.

Daar is wel 'n vreemde atmosfeer in die lug. Ek is nie seker of die res van die Oogies-vallei mense soos ek bietjie jaloers is nie, of is dit die valse-voorgee vriendelike van die "gaste huis" nie maar die groep is definitief nie meer een groep nie. Ek sou beter voel as dit gevoel het asof hulle bietjie meer omgee. Jy weet





Hier is dit nou! Hy vertel vir ons wie verantwoordelik is vir watter etes en noem dat die kos daar is, ons moet dit net maak. Almal is baie opgewonde, want dié is nou die hele doel van die toer. Die reis terug na die Lomba. “Die Angoliese weermag manne vat ons tot daar op hulle trokke, daar slaap ons oor, so vat ‘n klein tentjie soos bespreek voor die toer.” Ons gaan saam kos maak en eet, ek sien vreeslik uit. My Pa, ook vreeslik opgewonde en dalk ‘n bietjie bly dat hy nie self hoef te ry nie. Almal is moeg, en ‘n hele paar van ons gaan slaap vroeg. Hier kom dit nou... die Lomba.

16 September

as iemand ons gevra het of ons okay is, of “is julle reg om weer te ry” (want nie almal het soos konings geslaap nie). Ek dink ek is somers vies want dis vir my vreeslik om my ouers te sien ongemaklik wees. Ek wens so ek kon vir my pa, die bietjie rus wat ek gekry het oordra, of selfs net ‘n entjie van die pad ry. Ek en Mamma het natuurlik aangebied, maar ons is nie geregistreer as drywers in die land nie, en as hulle ons aftrek kan ons in groot moeilikheid wees. Ek sal vir hom ‘n energie drankie koop en sal maar gesels en musiek moet speel om hom te probeer wakker hou so lank as moontlik, besluit ek. Daar is ‘n onderdruk-kende beneuktheid in die lug, en die gevoel vertrek saam met ons na Cuito Cuanavale.

Dis al donker toe ons by Cuito aankom en die groot oorlog standbeeld is helder verlig en lyk pragtig soos ons inry na die ambassade huisies. Regeringsgrond. Dis duidelik dat die land geld het, dis ook duidelik waarheen al die geld gaan. Ek dink terug aan my land en die kommer oor ons land se agteruitgang kom steek weer kop uit in my hart. Ag. Here kom red ons tog asb. “Generaal, generaal, sal jy die boere kom haal...” sis ek die kommer uit wat so gereeld my vrede wil kom steel.

Twee van die huisies word vir ons oop gesluit en ons kamp net daar in die pad. Almal dood gelukkig dat ons dit gemaak het. Ons het badkamers en storte en selfs ‘n yskas om te gebruik. Die enigste gevaar is die groot plat spinnekoppe wat in die huisies in getrek het. Hulle sit in elke hoek en draai, maar deel darem hulle huisies met ons en na Oogies-Vallei is die klein spinnekop oogies nie te erg nie.

Die aand word daar ‘n vuur gemaak en almal word gevra om net gou by mekaar te kom vir ‘n paar reëlins. Oom Johan Kooij vertel dat ons more vertrek met die twee weermag trokke. My hart bok-spring.

Die son is voor ons op maar die opwinding in my hart brand warmer as die son se strale. Vandag is die dag wat ons op die trokke klim! Maar na ‘n koppie koffie en selfs ‘n vinnige ontbyt daag daar net een trok op. My hart bons eers toe ek die “Monster-truck” sien nader ry en ek neem fotos. “Maak eers seker jy mag van hulle foto’s neem” skree Marizaan met ondervinding en ek lag somers lekker, maar ek maak seker net vir ingeval.



Na Oom Rob rusteloos rondloop en erg op sy foon besig is, word ons in gelig dat die 2de trok oppad is, maar dat dit eers teen vanmiddag hier sal wees. Uit die groep kom die voorstel dat ons die oggend gebruik om na die Monument te gaan kyk. Almal is positief en gelukkig met die voorstel.

Oom Johan Kooij en oom Rob herhinder ons dat hierdie hulle monument is, en dat ons nie noodwendig gaan saam stem met die uiteinde van die Angolese weergawe van die geskiedenis nie. Die feit van die saak is dat hulle nie gewen het nie, maar in hulle perspektief, is hulle militêre-doelwit wel bereik.

Ons stop oorkant die Groot Monument wat in die

dag lig, nog meer indrukwekkend lyk. Voor ons na die Koper monument stap, gaan kyk ons eers na die weermag – voertuie, vliegtuie en wapens met wile wat gebruik is deur die Angolianse weermag gedurende die oorlog. Hierdie is groot, indrukwekkende en ook vreesaanjaande masjiene. By die vliegtuig gaan staan almal bietjie langer stil. Pappa vertel hoe hierdie vliegtuie net-net bo hulle verby gevlieg het. Ek hoor hoe hulle in die nag beweeg het met die Ratels sodat



die vyand hulle nie kon sien nie en in die dag geka-moefleer was. “Hoe kon julle dan ry? So sonder ligte in ‘n ry? Dit word pik donker hier in die nag, en as julle dan ligte sou aan sit kon hulle julle sekerlik maklik sien?” Vra ek met ‘n frons, terwyl die prentjie in my kop nog nie wil vorm nie. “Die Ratel voor jou het ‘n klein liggie agter in die venster gehad, die drywer volg net reguit op daai liggie”

“O, okay.” verstaan ek nou dat “brights” nie regtig ter sprake was nie. “En die heel voorste Ratel, 23A? Hoe weet die man waarheen hy ry?” Hulle wil wil so bietjie vir my lag, maar antwoord dan dat hy net in die algemene rigting gery het na waarheen hulle moes gaan. “O,okay” besef ek nou ook dat ‘n pad ook nie regtig ter sprake is nie. Ek moet bieg. Ek het gesukkel met die konsep van “weg kruip” en “hulle sien ons nie”. Hoe kan jy hierdie hele brigade met groot Ratels

en troepe en goeters nie sien nie? Ek bedoel, al lyk ‘n mens of ‘n ding soos ‘n boom of ‘n dier vormom, bome beweeg nie?

Dit moes lawaai het soos die Ratels bome voor hulle plat vee? In die daglig moet dit mos ‘n hele pad wys en die vliegtuig kan dan sien. waar die stop? Hier djie puzzle prentjie in my kop waarom ek nou al jare wonder, sou eers by die Lomba in plek val, en ek is amper daar.



Ek draai my gesig vanaf die vliegtuig in die rigting van my ouers wat langs mekaar loop op die netjies steen paadjie wat deur en om al die Masjiene loop. Ek kyk met nuwe oë na my Mamma lief. Daar skyn ‘n sagte pienk glas om die kort, sagte vroultjie wat hand aan hand langs Pappa stap, en luister soos hy gesels. Ek dink terug aan die briewe wat sy vir my pa geskryf het toe hy in die weermag was. Verliep op ‘n man wat die moontlikheid dra om nooit weer terug te kom nie. Hoe het haar hart dit gehou? Hulle het getrou kort nadat my pa uit die weermag uit was. Altwee nog jonk. Al die jare wat sy met die “after-shock” van my pa se weermag dae moes baklei. Al die gebede wat sy in hulle huwelik ingewerk het. Al die moeilike tye, seer en ek’s seker ook woede wat sy moes verwerk.

Die vroue agter die 61 Meg manne mag nooit vergeet word nie. Die mammas wat gebed het vir hulle jong seuns in die weermag. Die meisies, verloofdes en vroue wat die briewe gestuur het. Die vroue wat nie die weermag – emosie gepakte mans verstaan het nie, maar steeds lief gehad het. Hulle was net soveel helde as elke liewe een van die jong soldate.

Na die aanskou van die Angola weermag voertuie



en gesprekke oor die verskil in die toerusting tussen die 61 Meg en die MPLA Fapla se masjiene, het ek besluit dat hulle wapens en toerusting goed was, dalk 'n bietjie beter en sterker en meer was as ons sin. Diegene wat dus reken dat hierdie oorlog onregverdig was en dat Angola op die agter voet was, het dit heeltemal verkeerd. Intendeel, ek was somer nog trotser op ons manne. Hulle het werklik teen 'n hele paar skrikwekkende wapens oorwin.

Na die deur-loop staan ek by oom Lukas, by die ingang en wag vir die klein groepies om weer by mekaar te kom. Oom Lukas antwoord nog van my vra en deel ook 'n stukkie van sy storie met my. Ek voel bevoorreg om te hoor waaraan hy dink as hy hier deurloop. Ek wens so die manne wil meer vertel. My prentjie beeld is nog dof en elke stukkie bydrae word waardeer.

Almal beweeg nou na die toring van 'n standbeeld. Die beeld fokus op twee Angolese soldate, versier in koper. Hulle staan teenoormekaar, elkeen se linkerhand gelig na bo, waar hulle saam Angola as land na bo hou. In elkeen se regterhand is daar 'n geweer wat vas gehou word, wat saam met die helm en klere dit duidelik maak dat die soldate is. Hulle staan op die bokant van 'n Russiese tenk. En agter hulle is daar 'n getekende beeld wat lyk soos een van die

gewere, toegedraai in hulle lands vlag. Dit dra 'n sterk boodskap van oorwinning en trots. Aan die voet van die beeld staan daar in Portugese "Memorial a vitoria da batalha do cuito cuanavale" wat beteken Memorial to the Victory of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. Alhoewel die beeld baie mooi gemaak is en ek is seker

dat dit baie vir hulle beteken, voel selfs ek bietjie gefrustreerd. Hulle het dan nie gewen nie. Dink ek by myself. Maar hoor dan weer my pa se stem in my ore wat sê "Daar is nie 'n wenner in oorlog nie" Hulle het seker die reg om hulle land te vier, ten spyte van my opinie en gevoelens.

Agter die beeld is daar 'n halfmaan koper muur wat die hele storie lyn vertel van die oorlog. Dit wys duidelik dat daar 'n tydperk was wat die Fapla swaar deur geloop het. Dit

was vir my nogal iets spesiaal om die manne daar te sien stop en trots te sê, hierdie was ons. Selfs die wat niks gesê het nie, het hier so 'n klein trotse glimlaggie laat glip. Dis goed, hulle mag trots wees in hulle oorwinnings. Ek wens net hulle het hulle eie monument gehad, in hulle land waarheen hulle die kinders, en klein-kindere kon vat. Hulle storie kon vertel. Die muur eindig waar Angola en die MPLA oorwin. En as mens dan die storie lyn volg van 1987 tot 1988 is dit seker in hulle perspektief reg. Maar hier in ons harte maak die volle waarheid nie sin nie, vir ons maak die einde seer en kwaad.

Hierdie jong 61 Meg soldate het geveg vir hulle land. Hulle het die opdragte volkome uitgevoer. Hulle het oorwin! So waar is die welkom terug feesviering? Waar is hulle monument? Waar is hulle toring hoë, dankie vir wat julle vir ons gedoen het standbeeld? My trane lê weer vlak soos ons na die moderne gebou loop wat deel vorm van die monument. Maar die trane is nie dankbaarheid, bewondering of 'n hart met te veel emosies nie. Hierdie is 'n gefrustreerde woede wat hier in my brand. Hoe kon my land sy eie mense so vertrap, so verraai. Hoe kon hulle hierdie mense wat as wenner en helde moes terug verwelkom word, soos slegte misdadigers laat terug keer? Waarom het niemand die waarheid vertel nie en hoe kon ons dit toelaat? Ek is kwaad want daar is geen monument, of standbeeld nie. Daar is nie eers 'n bladsy in die skole



se geskiedenis boeke nie. Ek is kwaad. Waarom moet my Pa my na die vyands-land toe bring om vir my 'n deel van sy storie te wys?

Ons besoek ook die monument wat die eerste toer groep in 2018 op gesit het, en kyk ook na die Ratels. "Ek is bly pappa het ons die keer saam gebring" gee ek hom 'n stywe drukkie en soos altyd glimlag hy liefdevol terug. Ons gaan stap op die ou Lomba brug wat hulle af geskiet het, en al is die manne stil kan ek sien dat die vir hulle 'n belangrike ding is. Dit was een van die doelwitte, om die brug op te blaas, en hulle het.



Terug by ons kamp plek, wag ons nog so bietjie vir die tweede trok om op te daag. Die eerste trok is reeds vol gepak met petrol kanne, sakke, tente, kratte en al die ander dinge wat ons gevoel het moet saam gaan. Die Angolese weermag manne klim ook daar op en sit, lê of staan net waar hulle kan plek kry. Toe ons trok opdaag is almal heel opgewonde en vind elkeen gou 'n sitplek.

Die trok skud en ruk vreeslik en na 'n rukkie dink ons almal met waardering terug aan die sagte sitplekke van ons eie motors. Ek weet nie of dit die opgewondenheid was dat ons nou uiteindelik na die Lomba verkeer of dit al die snaakse persoonlikhede van die groep nie, maar almal lag. Die grap-jasse, oom Willie en Andries vermaak ons vreeslik. Daar is 'n lekker atmosfeer en die gelag van my ouers maak my hart so, so bly.

The Lorax ?



Dis al reeds laat en die son sit al laag. 'n Entjie in die vreemde wêreld in, verander die landskap dramaties. Ons het die stedelike dele nou agter gelaat en die landskap waardeur ons ry is lowergroen bos. Dan verander die groen rondom ons in 'n oop sand area met afgekapte boompies. My Pa vertel dat die Chinese 'n paar jaar vantevore die land bewoon het. Hulle het vir die Angolese gewys hoe om die bome af te breek vir die hout. Hulle draai 'n tou om die bas van die boom, trek dit dan al stywer en stywer totdat dit op 'n dag die boomstam heeltemal dood-druk en dit dan afval. Dis net stompie bome vir myle.

"Dit laat my dink aan "The Lorax" se Dorita. Ek, Ruan en Marizaan stem dadelik saam. Dan verduidelik ons, jonger generasie dat die "Lorax" 'n teken prent is wat gaan oor die belangrikheid van bome. "O, okay" sê my pa en ek kan sien dat hy verseker ander prente in sy gedagte wêreld sien as wat ons doen.



Dis vreeslik is dit nie, hoe twee generasies na die selfde ding kan kyk en twee heeltemal verskillende ervarings het. Hoe kan ek verwag dat hy moet verstaan waarvan ons praat as hy dit nog nooit gesien het nie. Is die hoe hulle voel as dit kom by die oorlog? Dat ons nooit werklik sal verstaan nie. Dat ons nooit die regte prent in ons gedagtes sal kan vorm nie, want ons was nie daar nie.

"Mag ek oom iets vra" draai ek na oom Oekie toe. "Jy kan vra." antwoord hy. "Het oom al ooit met oom se twee seuns gepraat oor die oorlog" Hy is eers 'n rukkie stil en sê dan, "Nee, nie regtig nie" ek frons



liggies en vra dan “Hoekom nie?” “Ek weet nie, dis deel van die verlede, mens moet vorentoe beweeg” “Dis belangrik dat oom met hulle daaroor praat, dis deel van wie oom is, en daarom ook deel van wie hulle is.” Hy glimlag en sê “Ons sal sien, dit was hulle idee dat ek kom” My hart glimlag, want tenspyte van wat hierdie manne dink, hulle kinders wil’ weet, hulle wil die stories hoor en al was hulle nie daar nie, selfs al kan hulle nooit ten volle verstaan nie, hulle besef dat hierdie tydperk belangrik is. Ek glo dat elke kind net inspirasie en trots in hulle pa’s sal vind wanneer hulle na die stories luister,- ek het.

Jy sien as ek vir my pa die prent van “The Lorax” wys, sal hy verstaan waarom die’ boompies ons daar aan laat dink, net so as hy vir my foto’s wys, die verhale vertel en verduidelik wat met hom gebeur het toe hy hier geveg het, sal ek ook beter verstaan waarom sekere gebeure hom aan die weermag dae laat terug dink, waarom die agteruit gaan van ons land so erg is, waarom seker gebere hom kan kwaad maak, hartseer maak of laat lag. Ek hoop werklik dat elkeen van die manne sal terug gaan huis toe en net sal begin praat. Die waarheid is dat julle stories deel is van ons

mens wees ook. Dit help ons verstaan hoekom julle die soort ouer is wat julle is, waarom julle ons op ‘n sekere manier groot gemaak het, dit verduidelik so baie in ons eie lewens, antwoord so baie van ons’ vra. So, liewe 61Meg Man en Pappa, deel jou stories, asb.

Die afgekapte boompies hou lank aan, maar dan ry ons op die sand paadjie waarop hierdie groot trok net-net pas tussen deur klomp klein paaltjies geplant aan weerskante van die pad. Die paaltjies word vinnig meer soos hulle hardloop van die kant van die pad af tot ver in die dieptes in. Sommiges is gemerk met ‘n blou verf lyn, ander met wit, maar meeste met rooi. Hier en daar staan ‘n groot boom, ook gemerk met

twee groot rooi strepe. Daar stap drie of vier mense met wit pakke en helms in die sanderige area rond en druk-druk met stokke teen die oppervlak van die grond. Dis landmyne, skok my hart toe iemand die woord sê. Hier ry ons met een groot trok, reg deur die landmyne. Altans die moontlikheid van landmyne. 35 jaar later en die oorlog se impak is steeds aktief. Die moontlikheid van gevaar is so sigbaar, letterlik gemerk met rooi waarskuwings. Hoe vreesaanjaand moes dit nie wees om hier deur te beweeg nie, met die wete dat daar heel moontlik landmyne oral om jou kan wees. Dit was nie 35 jaar terug gemerk met rooi “wees-versigtig” merktjies nie.



Soos ons verder ry, raak die impak van die oorlog al hoe meer sigbaar. Dis son sak nou vinnig en die dames vra of ons gou kan stop vir ‘n “veldjie” maar ons kan glad nie van die pad af stap in die veld in nie, dis gevaarlik want die area is nog nie skoon gemaak nie. Nie een van ons is lus om deur ‘n landmyn opgeblaas te word nie en ons piepie agter die groot wiele van die trok in die pad. Wie sou nou ooit kon dink dat “veldjie vang” so gevaarlik kon wees.



Ons stop uiteindelik en die weermag manne klim dadelik af, maak een groot vuur waar hulle later sou lê en slaap. Daar is vir ons gesê om nie vêr van die pad af te gaan nie, net twee meter in, want die area is soos die ander nog nie skoon nie. Ons maak nie kos nie, almal is dood moeg en het ietsie wat hulle by hulle gehou het op die trok gepeusel. Pappa en oom Ockie slaan vir hulle elkeen 'n stretcher op, net skuins agter die trokke en slaap daar in die oopte, oë na die sterre. Ek en mamma lief kruip in die klein 2 x persoon tentjie in en hou mekaar vas deur die koue nag. Wat 'n avontuur van 'n dag. Kanonne, standbeelde, trokke, landmyne, die gelag van twintig mense almal ewe warm, koud en moeg. Dit was 'n lang, rowwe dag, dit was 'n goeie dag.



17 September

Op soek na Atlantis

Vroeg, vroeg die volgende oggend is ons weer op. Pappa hulle het maar sleg geslaap want dit was 'n vreeslike koue aand, selfs ek en mamma in die tent, het bietjie koud gekry. Ek kan sien dat Oom Andries, Willie, Lukas en Gerrie ook buite geslaap het, in hulle slaap sakke. Die dames klim nou omtrent onder die trokke in soos ons probeer wegkruip agter die groot wiele om te piepie, anders as die mans wat sommer net hulle rue kan draai. Tandeborsel in die oggend is altyd die lekkerste, dit laat jou weer so bietjie mens voel. Maar die koffie, die koffie is hemels en ek is so dankbaar dat pappa vir Mimpie (die kamp ketel) saam gebring het, ek dink sy het ons almal nuwe hoop gegee elke oggend.

Alles is gou opgeslaan en sit elkeen weer op sy plek, op die trok. Ek het die vorige aand my rooi truitjie oor my kop gegooi en die moue oor my ore onder my ken vas gebind, dit help vir die koue en hou boonop

my ore bietjie skoon van die sand en stof. So ek doen dit sommer dadelik weer. Die ou roes rooi truitjie was verseker die beste item wat ek saam my gevat het op die trok. Ek sal dit nooit weer kan aantrek of dra sonder om aan die Angola Avontuur te dink nie. Heel agter aan ons kant sit oom André, met sy fiets-ry masker oor sy neus en mond getrek, donker bril en hoed om al die stof te keer, dan Oom Ockie, ek, Pappa en Mamma, gevolg deur die ander menses. Die trok skud rof hier agter en elke keer as die rat verander word, of die wind draai en dan eet ons die sande-rige stof.

Die boom takke is natuurlik die ergste. Vir een of ander rede, ry ons drywer of mal stadig of belaglik vinnig, maar so gereeld word ons van agter geslaan deur takke wat voel soos latte, en so nou en dan 'n dik stomp wat voel asof hy jou borskas gebreek het soos dit jou wind uit slaan. Almal hang voor oor soos gebuigde boewe wat oppad is na die doodsvonnis. Ons het soos altyd nie tyd vir ontbyt nie en ons is almal moeg en honger.

Ons kry hierdie uur waar iemand op die trok genoeg energie het om lewe in te bring en dan lag en gesels ons weer, dan is almal weer dood stil, soos dooies wat hier hang. Soos sardientjies sit ons styf teen mekaar, dit hou jou regop. "Dis hoe ons gesit het daai tyd ook" sê my Pa. "Ons het net baie meer in gepas op 'n bankie", lag hy "Ons was baie Kleiner daai tyd. Daar was vier bankies op 'n trok, een aan elke kant soos nou, en nog twee in die middel, waar die ouens rug, teen rug gesit het. Hier was nie plek vir 'n muis nie. Elke ou het net sy streep-sak"

"Kan jy glo, hoe ver ons so' gery het, my rug sal dit nou nie meer hou nie" antwoord Oom Ockie. "Ja, nee en ons het so gesit en slaap." hy wys na Oom Willie & Oom Herman wat oorkant ons sit en rondval soos die



trok ruk en skud. “Dis baie erg Pappa” sê ek sommer bekommerd. Dis nou eers dag twee, en ek is goed gatvol. Die geslaan en geskud laat jou voel soos ‘n sak aartappels sonder waarde wat iemand agter op ‘n trok gegooi het en van jou vergeet het.

Die ergste is hoe afhanklik jy is. Jy moet op die trok klim, daar is nie ‘n opsie van “ek wil nie meer nie” of “vat my huis toe” of koop ‘n bus kaartjie of draai om en stap weg nie. Wat my vang soos ek nog na die slaapende lywe kyk is die lewensloosheid van die prentjie. Na ‘n rukkie pla die klein lat takkies nie meer nie, jy sit maar daar en aanvaar die slae, die son wat brand, die stof oor al op jou, die sweet, die koue, niks daarvan maak meer saak nie. My lyf is self moeg en my oë wil-wil toe bly. Ek kyk op soos ek ook voor oor lê, en sien hoe ons soos ‘n see van dooie lywe

almal net saam val, van kant tot kant. Dan besef ek, die mense saam met my op die trok is nou net lywe, daar is nie ‘n persoonlikheid in sig nie. Is dit hoe hulle gevoel het, agter op die trokke 35 jaar terug? Soos dooies, waardelose sakke aartappels? Soos lywe, net nog ‘n nommer? Geen siel, geen gees, net nog ‘n lyf wat moet gaan veg omdat daar nie regtig ‘n ander keuse is nie. Jy dink aan niks, jy gaan net saam soos met die golwe in die see sonder om eers daar oor te dink. My hart breek vir my pa, hoe sterk is hy nie. Hy was nog altyd my hero, maar dis asof al hierdie dinge my net weer laat besef hoe sterk hy is.

Dis seker so 13:30/14:00 toe ons weer lewe kry omdat ons by die Lomba rivier is. Uiteindelik dink ek by myself, iets met die naam Lomba in. Daar is ‘n gemeenskap naby die rivier, hulle bly natuurlik hier vir die water. Ons kom tot stillstand aan die kant van die gemeenskap onder ‘n groot boom. Niemand weet regtig hoekom die trok stop nie want ons wil graag kom tot by die Lomba, daar waar die aanslag was. So ons bly sit. Oom Johan Kooji en Oom Rob is besig om te praat met die Voorman by die ander trok en ‘n paar mense klim af om bene te rek. Ek en mamma het vir ons ‘n tweede pakkie klere in gepak en gaan trek gou die koeler klere aan om die hoek van ‘n winkeltjie. Ons het steeds die langmoue van die vorige nag aangehad en dit was nou al weer vreeslik warm. Ons borsel sommer weer tande en voel baie beter. “Nou voel mens darm weer mens.” glimlag my mooi Moeder vir my en ek is weereens so trots dat sy saam gekom het, en so’ positief bly.

Toe ons terug kom by die trok, is almal heel onseker

oor wat aangaan. Oom Rob loop op en af, besig op sy foon en Oom Johan lyk goed kwaad. Na ‘n hele rukkie van gesels en wag en wonder, hoor ons dat die Voorman weier om ons verder te vat en sê dat sy opdrag was om ons tot hier by die Lomba rivier te bring. “Maar hy lieg man!” sê Oom Johan.

Ons besef dat die storie eers uit gesort moet word. En ons vra dat die trokke onder ‘n ander, groter boom moet gaan stop in ‘n sy paadjie. ‘n Groot deel van die groep wik en weeg. Ons is moeg en oorweeg om die standbeeldjie wat ons by die Lomba wou opsit, hier by die brug op te sit en dan terug te draai. Maar niemand wil dit regtig doen nie, die doel was om tot by die Lomba uit kom, ‘n doel wat eweskielik net te vêr voel, buite bereik voel. So ons maak vir die eerste keer van dat ons vertrek het kos! Jip ‘n lekker boere potjie. Ons gaan swem in die koue water van die Lomba en behalwe dat hierdie ‘n groot oomblik is, is dit ook heerlik om so in die warm dag af te koel. Ek kan nie help om te glimlag soos ek die manne sien afkoel in die water van die Lomba rivier nie. Oom Willie vra vir my om vir hom ‘n foto te neem, want hy het 35 jaar terug, ook in die water af gekoel. Hulle almal het. Wat ‘n amazing historiese oomblik! Ek kan nie glo ek swem saam met my pa in die Lomba rivier nie.

Die koue water, en warm vol borde kos gee ons almal weer enegrie en hoop en uitsien om aan te hou. Arme Oom Rob het deur gebreek en met ‘n dikbek Voorman van die Angolese weermag gaan ons voort. Natuurlik ry die trok drywer nou onnodig vinnig en lelik en ons almal is gou weer negatief soos ons deur takke geslaan word. Oom Johan reël ‘n paar manne om die takke in die pad af te kap soos ons ry, want een van die redes was dat die pad te nou is vir die trokke om deur te ry, maar dit gaan ons nie nou meer keer nie, ons het net te vêr gekom om nou om te draai.

Dit was al laat middag toe ons by die rivier weg gery het en dit is nou al weer goed donker. Ons ry in by ‘n woon gebied, waar klomp hut -huisies gebou is. In die nag sien mens net die vuurtjies wat brand en oogies wat staar. Ons ry net verby die huisies tot by ‘n groot dam. Die trok sluit af en die drywer spring uit. Die tweede trok stop ook en al die manne klim af. Hulle gaan haal water en sommige van ons mense klim ook af om bene te rek. Vir my voel die te veel soos die vorige valei van starende ogies en ek bly sit. Na ‘n rukkie wat dit voel of niemand regtig weet wat aangaan nie, hoor ons dat die weermag manne wil hê dat ons hier moet afklim en oorslaap. Die groep,



Bn waar Alves se Ratel as wrak lê. Dit is pik donker en ons kan nie die wrak sien nie. 'n Paar manne kon nie wag nie en stap met flitse tot by die die Ratel. Ons slaan tent op, dood moeg. Vanaand is dit weer koud en Pappa klim ook in die tentjie in. Hy hou vir Mamma vas wat in die middel lê en sy vir my. "Ons is hier Here. Dankie. Seën asb die dag wat voorlê." Môre - môre stap ek in die Lomba.

18 September

Die Lomba, 35 jaar later, 'n tasbare realiteit

kwaad omdat ons so baie tyd gemors het om te wag vir hulle vanmiddag stem saam dat ons liever nog 'n entjie moet aan ry, tot waar ons moet wees. Al is almal teen die tyd moeg en koud. Die weermag manne lyk ongelukkig met ons maar ek het 'n onrustige gevoel gehad met die gedagte van kamp opslaan so naby al die hut-huisies, toe dit nie net ek is wat so voel nie en toe die trok verder ry is ek verlig.

Die grappies op die trok vang weer spoed en vir 'n rukkie lag ons almal weer lekker saam. Later word dit stil, dood stil en ys koud. Sommige menses kry geslaap so regop in die sit. Dit voel vir my ons is oppad na die verlore stad, Atlantis. Lê die Lomba dan ook erens onder in die see? Bestaan die plek ooit? Ek kyk na my ouers. Hulle lywe is moeg en seer. My Pa wat my Mamma lief styf vas hou is vir my so mooi en romanties, hulle is so beeldskoon dink ek soos ek opkyk na die sterre. Die lug is so skoon en oop.

Die sterre sing God se grootheid en ek glimlag sag. Ster-gebede so in die laat nag is wat ons nou dra. "Ons is amper daar" versterk die Here my gedagtes en my gemoed, met sy sterk en sagte stem in my ore. "Amper by die Lomba, God is groot, God is goed." fluister ek saggies.

Dit was seker naby of verby middernag toe ons uiteindelik stop. Ons arriveer by 'n oop area oorkant die 32

Almal is vroeg reeds op. Almal trek hulle swart Bravo Kompanie hemde en hoedjies aan. Toe ons uit die tent uitstap om die normale oggend roetine van koffie en wakker aan te pak, sien ek die Lomba Vlake. Ek sien die Alves Ratel. Ek verstaan waarna Kmdt Bok Smit verwys het toe hy gepraat het van die Shona, die groot oop vloedvlakte wat lê tussen die twee bebosde areas soos ek oor die oop veld kyk met bome en dig bosse aan alby kante. Die hele toneel maak nou sin.

'n Rukkie later kom almal by mekaar by die Ratel. Ons aanskou die wrak en neem so veel as moontlik in. Hierdie was ons sin, dink ek by myself, ons mense. Ons jong manne. Rondom die Ratel lê dele daarvan. 61 Meg het later self die Ratel opgeblaas omdat hulle nie wou hê dat die toerusting en tegnologie bestudeer moes word nie. Die drywer van die Ratel het geskrik nadat hulle hoofman in die toring geskiet is, en per ongeluk, en ek is seker half blindelings in die oop area in gery. Die Ratel was geskiet deur 'n Russiese tenk terwyl die drywer en die gunner nog daar in was. My hart breek al weer. "Niemand wen in oorlog nie" hoor ek dit weer in my kop.

Ons word by mekaar geroep en die manne gaan staan in hulle formasie langs die Ratel vir 'n foto. Dan word die dames gevra om ook daar te gaan staan. My hart is al reeds oorvol met emosie. Na die storie van die wrak





Na die seremonie, vaar ons die veld in. Dis nou al vreeslik warm en die swart hemde trek die son in. Die bos waar die oorlog plaas gevind het is baie dig. Dis glad nie wat ek in gedagte gehad het nie. Om die waarheid te sê, weet ek nie wat ek in gedagte gehad het nie, maar dit was nie dié nie. In my gedagtes was die oorlog dof, bruin en donker. Mense wat van vêr op mekaar skiet. Maar dis nie so nie. Glad nie. Hier is helder groen bome en boompies en bosse oral. Van lig geel tot donker groen. Jy kan saars twee meter voor jou sien, so dig is dit gegroei. Die grond is sanderig en die kontoer lyne van die tunnels wat die manne gegrou het om agter te lê en weg te kruip is steed daar.

en 'n paar woorde word die dames gevra om blom saadjies om die ratel te strooi. "Die ratel verteenwoordig dood, maar daar is lewe na die dood. Dit is wat ons hier wil onthou" Dis mooi dink ek, veral dat die vroue dit moet strooi. Ek glo vas dat God 'n vrou geskep het om te herstel, te genees, te hoop, te bid en te help lewe.

Ek kan dit nie meer in hou nie en ek huil. Ek huil soos wat ek elke saadjie neer gooi met die hoop en vertroue dat dit sal blom. Ek huil want ek wens ek kon troos so oor die mense se ouers gooi, oor hulle geliefdes wat hulle nooit kon terug verwelkom na die oorlog nie. Ek huil want hierdie is nie my Pa se graf nie, en daaroor is ek dankbaar. Ek dink nie hulle verstaan nie. Ek huil oor alles, die hele feit dat die oorlog daar was. Ek huil oor alles wat my Pa moes deur maak, ek huil omdat ek so trots is op hom. My hart huil by die Ratel soos ek die Here smee vir genesing vir elke lieve een van die mense. Ek huil want my lewe kon 35 jaar terug hier geëindig het, voor dit sou begin. Ek huil want die Here het hierdie ongelooflike seun beskerm, van hom 'n man gemaak en aan my geleen as 'n Pappa. Ek huil want ek het hom so bitter baie lief.



Pappa was 'n Geweerskutter, heel voor. So hy het uit geklim en langs die Ratel gestap. Kan jy jou in dink? As hy iemand moes skiet sou hulle nie ver kon wees nie, hulle sou slegs 'n paar meter van hom af moes wees. Hierdie was nie "Cowboy" film waar hulle elkeen agter 'n klipmuur staan en kop uitsteek en net vêr skiet nie. Nee, hierdie was 'n "face-to-face" oorlog. Hier speel die bos 'n groot rol.

"Ons het geoefen in die bos, ons het opleiding in die bos gekry, dit het ons baie gehelp" het hy gesê toe ek





hom uitva hier oor. Toe ons na die monument gaan kyk het en ek al daai voertuie gesien het, het ek regtig gesukkel om te verstaan hoe mens dit nie myle ver weg kon sien nie, maar nou dat ek hier staan, maak dit sin. Hier kan 'n olifant net aan die anderkant van 'n boom staan en ek sou dit nie weet nie. Hoe hulle rigting kon hou weet ek ook nie. My rigting is en was nog nooit goed nie, maar in die bos sal ek verseker verdwaal.

Ons almal loop rond in kleiner groepies en aanskou die verskillende tenks. Na 'n rukkie kom ons bymekaar by een van Fapla se tenks wat blykbaar heel eerste uitgeskiet is. Dit is nou al goed warm en die son se strale skyn sterk en helder deur die bome. Almal help om die standbeeld te bou en ons maak 'n kaart op die grond soos wat hulle daardie tyd ook gedoen het. Dan word ons nader geroep om na die gebeure van die dag te luister soos dit verduidelik word op die kaart. Dit vat 'n rukkie omdat alles in Portugees ook vertaal word vir die Angolese manne. Daarna beweeg ons na die monument wat ons daar opsit en die woorde word geles in Afrikaans en Portugees. Ons rig die monument hier op vir almal wat daardie dag gesterf het, ons mense en hulle sin. Daarna neem ons groep fotos en word ons manne gevra om hulle hemde vir die Angolianse weermag manne te gee as teken dat ons almal hier onder gely het. Hulle almal lyk heel tevrede, behalwe die voorman wat steeds dik bek is vir ons. En op 'n manier blameer ek hom nie.

Dit was mooi en wonderlik en regtig "great" om die storie te hoor en eer te bring aan almal wat gesterf het hier 35 jaar terug. Maar ek wens tog dat die mense wat hier is, die manne wat die moeite gedoen het om weer tot hier terug te kom die geleentheid kon kry om ook iets te sê. As ons bymekaar kon kom en daar was vir hulle gevra om een ding te noem wat hulle onthou van die dag, of iets te deel waaraan hulle nou dink

dat hulle terug is, sou dit so veel meer beteken het. Dis tog hulle elkeen se storie, deel van wie hulle is. Dit gaan nie net oor die weermag en bevele nie. Dit gaan nie net oor een perspektief nie. Dit gaan oor die mense, die mense wat hier staan. Ek wens daar was vir ons vroue en kinders gevra om ietsie te deel oor wat ons beleef, nou dat ons hier staan.

Daar is die ding wat gesê word, dat blomme op 'n graf mooi is, maar dis te laat. Dat ons blomme vir mekaar moet gee terwyl ons leef. Hierdie seremonie voel so bietjie soos blomme op 'n graf. Mooi, maar wat van die mense wat nou hier is? Hulle verdien ook blomme. Ek sal dan maar my storie moet skryf, besluit ek. Want jy sien, alhoewel die seremonie mooi is, en steeds baie beteken, alhoewel die reis tot hier rof was en die moeite werd was, verdien my ouers meer. Verdien die mense meer.

Die son brand nou goed neer, en Mamma lief trek swaar. Haar lyfie het baie deur gemaak die afgelope paar jaar. Hier is min kos en water in ons liggame en Pappa en ek stap saam met haar terug trok toe. Ek kan sien my pa is nou klaar. Hy het tot hier terug gekom

en ek weet hy is bly en dankbaar vir die geleentheid, maar hy voel sleg dat dit so rof is. "ek het nie gedink dit gaan so" wees nie" sê hy vir ons twee. Ons verseker hom dat dit steeds vir ons spesiaal is om dit saam hom te deel en dat ons bly is ons het tot hier gekom. Later is almal weer by die trok en ons besluit dat ons oppak en terug gaan na die lugmag gronde in Cuito waar ons alles agter gelos het.

Snaaks genoeg vat die weermag ons nou 'n die "kort pad" om soos ons hulle oorspronklik gevra het om ons te bring. Maar die misverstand tussen die Lomba rivier en die Shona het ons 1 dag reis verleng. Die pad terug is steeds swaar, die rooi grond maak ons goed vuil en die son het al weer net te vinnig gesak. Ons stop wel donker dieselfde dag by die ambassade huisies. Almal



is moeg, kry hulle goed en gaan na hulle skuilings vir die aand. Ons kan weer stort en gaan slaap weer as mens in ons tente.

“Dankie Here, ons was daar, by die Lomba. En al het ek gedink ons gaan dit nooit weer terug maak nie het U ons veilig gehou. Laat hulle goed rus Here, hulle is deur baie.” Loer ek vir my ouers op hulle bed bo op die sleepwa en glimlag. 35 jaar later het ek agter my pa aan gestap oor die Shona, in die bos van die aanslag, het ek agter my held aan gestap, in sy voet-spore.

19 September

Vandag vertrek ons vanaf Cuito na Lubango. Die mense is almal redelik moeg en stil. Ek dink ‘n paar van ons sien uit om terug te beweeg huis toe. In die kar geniet ek my ouers se geselskap vreeslik, en die sagte sit plekke en die lug versorger. Die reis na Lubango is lank en ons stop erens in ‘n dorpie om petrol in te gooi en ‘n paar goedjies te koop. Daar is ‘n vreeslike atmosfeer onder die groep en kort-kort kom deel mense frustrasies met ons, ons deel saam. Die skool-kamp gevoel is terug. Dalk is almal net

moeg, dink ek by myself ook goed gefrustreerd. Die hele dag is ‘n aan-jaag dag, ry weg vir mekaar en wag vir mekaar dag. Oom Andries en Oom Willie wat heel agter ry laat ons darem lekker lag as hulle so nou en dan een van hulle liedjies vir ons speel oor die radio.

Laat middag vergesel die Angolese manne ons weer, die selfde klomp wat ons ontvang het by die grens en vat hulle ons na ‘n veld wat lyk soos ‘n deurloop area vanaf die plaaslike verblyf of altans plakkers kamp na die dorp.

Die groep voel onveilig hier en die atmosfeer is nou regtig nie lekker nie. Daar is nie ‘n wolkie in die lug nie en die son wat nou al baie laag sit is vuur-rooi en koeël rond. Soos almal uitklim om te besluit waarheen ons gaan en of ons hier gaan bly, raak die stemme al hoe meer. Ek bly liewer hier in die bakkie, want ek is nie lus vir die voorsê atmosfeer wat hang nie. My ma

klim ook na ‘n rukkie uit.” Jou Pa is nou goed gatvol, sê sy soos sy uitklim”, maar dit het ek klaar gesien.

En dan, hoor ek sy stem, hard en duidelik “Ek is nie jou troepie nie!” Jip, die bom het uiteindelik gebars en frustrasies word vir die eerste keer hardop gesê. Ek klim ook nou uit. My pa se frustasies verbaas my nie, want baie van ons voel soos hy. Hy is net die eerste een om dit hard op te sê. Ek hou nogal daarvan, dat hy altyd eerste iets sê. Dit help tog nie om heeltyd onderlangs gefrustreerd te wees nie, mens spreek dit mos aan en sorteer dit uit. Natuurlik help die woede wat saam met frustrasie loop nie altyd om goed “mooi” uit te praat nie. My Pa, soos die son, bloed warm met koeël ronde oë, spreek die voor-sê skool-kamp gevoel aan en dis goed so besluit ek. Dalk omdat ek, nes hy nie mense gaan vat wat oor ons en ander loop nie. Hierdie is ‘n toer groep, nie ‘n skool kamp nie. Hier is almal gelyk.



Vir die eerste keer hoor die groep die waarheid agter die “lang pad” na die Lomba en die weermag voorman se houding. Ons word ook nou ingelig dat agter die skerms daar gekonkel was om ons reis moeilik te maak. “Nou, vertel dit net vir ons, sodat ons ook weet wat aangaan” sê tannie Erika, ook lank al goed





Ons ry in by die park waar 'n mooi paadjie ons lei tot 'n plat sirkel waar ons afsluit en uitklim. Die uitkyk punte van hier bo-op die berg is beeldskoon en mens sien myle ver. Die berg is hoog en dit is duidelik as mens langs die kant afkyk in die diep canyon in. Ons neem foto's en bewonder die landskap. Hier op die berg bly 'n Hiemba gesin, jy kan hulle maklik uitken aan die min klere en harde modder op hulle koppe, gesmeer oor hulle hare.

Toe ons hier klaar is gaan ry ons een van die wereld se mees steil en winderigste paaie, die pad met al die draaie. Die landskap is beeldskoon en dit was groot pret om die konvooi te probeer vasvang in 'n foto na elke draai. Net na die pas stop ons om ietsie tee eet by 'n restaurantjie. Ons klim uit en die dag voel werklik soos vakansie. Na die lekker ete gaan kyk ons ook na die Jesus standbeeld, een van net vier in die wêreld. Dié een se naam is "The Christ, the King Statue", dit kyk oor die stad van Lubango, hier in die suide van Angola. Die beeld is 30-meter hoog en was gebou in 1957. Dit is baie interessant om die merke wat die oorlog op die beeld gelos het te sien.

omgekras. Weereens stem ek saam, die manne kan dalk 'n oorlog wen maar hulle kommunikasie vaardighede is nie van die beste nie. Ons verstaan wel nou beter hoekom die afgelope paar dae soveel moeiliker was as wat dit moes wees en ek dink en hoop dat die mense mekaar bietjie beter sal aanspreek.

Terwyl ons 'n paar dinge probeer uitpraat is dit Oom Cornie wat tot ons redding kom. Hy het met die weermag mense gereël dat ons nie hier gaan oornag nie, maar in 'n skool terrein hier naby gaan oor slaap. Hier vind ons vrede met 'n afgekampde area, met 'n hek en badkamers. Hierdie dag met die koeël rond sonsak, kom uiteindelik tot 'n einde.

20 September

Ons vertrek vanaf Lubango na Cahama. Dis 'n mooi dag en ek is so bly ons het hier by die skooltjie kom oor slaap. Ons besluit dat ons vandag bietjie gaan sight-seeing doen en ek is vreeslik opgewonde. Ons besoek heel eerste die klip vallei. Soos wat jy teen die berg opry verander die landskap en staan die grys klip al hoe meer uit. Die klippe word groter en groter.



Ons besoek ook die Dorsland Voortrekkers se monumentjie wat die storie en reis van die "Van der Merwes" vertel en dis nogal indrukwekkend om te dink dat hulle die aarde so kon toer met ossewa's. Ons kom weer laat en donker by ons kampeer plekkie aan, maar dis okay want die dag was baie lekker en interessant.

Ons stop by 'n dorpie laat middag omdat almal net 'n paar goedjies wil aankoop. Die dorpie is vreeslik besig en die Keweseki motorfietsies is soos in elke dorp, oral. Die Fietsies vermaak ons vreeslik, hulle is werklik die Taxi's van Angola soos daar maklik tien of twaalf mense op een fietsie rond ry. Sommiges Vervoer goedere, ander is openbare vervoer motors en dit is werklik ongelooflik toe ons een kry wat stil staan.

Soos ons deur die strate ry om weer uit te kom, vergeet Pappa lief dat mense hier aan die regter kant van die pad ry. By die stop beweeg hy stadig vorentoe om te probeer links indraai en toe Boemp! Daar lê 'n man op die sypaadjie langs sy klein motor fietsie. "O gonna" sê ons amper gelyk. Pappa was skaars uit die bakkie uit toe die "Polisia" daar stop met hulle groot mooi motorfietsie en AK74's. My hart klop kliphard, "hulle kan tog nou nie my Pa toe sluit nie", spring my brein na die ergste. Die man wat in die bakkie vas

gery het en baie dramatiese afgeval het, spring op en hardloop weg in een van die sy paadjies in.

By die Polisie stasie vind ons uit, dat die 'man' 'n moeilikheid maker is en hulle wou net seker maak ons is okay en dat die bakkie okay is. Hoe oulik is dit. Die res van die groep het solank aangehou ry. Oom Rob hulle het by ons gebly, en hy het saam met Pappa in gegaan by die stasie. Ek was baie dankbaar dat hulle ons nie heeltemal alleen gelos het nie. Na 'n kort rukkie is ons ook uit die dorp uit en vir een of ander rede kies ons 'n ander pad tot waar ons moet oornag. Wel ek dink nie dit was enigszins 'n pad nie, dit het meer gelyk soos 'n rivier bed.

Die rit was aaklig en baie stresvol. Dit raak al weer laat en die son sak net te vinnig. Dit was pik donker toe ons op die teer pad klim. Weereens kan ek dit nie regtig 'n teer pad noem nie. Die pad was vol vreeslike groot en gevaarlike gate. Ons ry so gou ons kan, moeg en gefrustreerd met die moeilike pad tot ons uiteindelik weer by die groep aan sluit waar hulle besig is om op te slaan in die veld. Hulle het nie te lank voor ons daar aan gekom nie en sê dat die pad wat hulle gery het net so woens was. "Ja, nee kyk, daai Voortrekkers was taai", dink ek by myself.

Dit voel vir my ons slaap in die middel van nêrens. Maar dis okay, teen die tyd is ek nie meer so gespanne nie, as iemand ons op die 'toer' wou dood maak, het hulle dit lank al gedoen. Ek is in elk geval te moeg om regtig om te gee, maar ek moet sê, dit was 'n lekker dag, die toer het vandag bietjie meer soos vakansie gevoel.

21 September

Die volgende oggend, word ek wakker en sien dat die "random" veld bunkers wegsteek onder die grond, waar een of ander belangrike man glo hier weggekruip vir maande. Die bunkers is donker en ek is werklik dankbaar dat ek nie daar moes weg kruip en vrees vir my lewe nie.

Ons het bietjie later geslaap en die manne maak weer vir ons 'n kamp stort. Dit is darem maar net die lekkerste lekker so in die oggend, veral na 'n rowwe nag. Oom Ockie hulle bederf ons met ontbyt. Selfs die ou verlore veld brakkie en sy goeie maniere word ook goed bederf met kossies soos Mamma na hom omsien met haar sagte hart vir diere. Oom Gerrie sê as hy kon het hy die woef saam hom huis toe gevat. Natuurlik speel ons weer ons toer liedjie, soos oom Ockie

nog elke oggend het, "Rise" van Callum Scott. Dis so' gepas dink ek nes elke ander oggend. Ons pak op en begin weer ry. Die groep besluit om die keer nie by Mielie se ratel te stop nie, nie omdat ons nie wil nie, maar omdat ons voor 5 oor die grens moet gaan Namibië in. Die tyd gaan ons vang en ek dink nie enige iemand het meer energie oor vir nog 'n rowwe, pik donker nag nie.

So trek ons vroeg skemer by ons staan plek in by Ruacana na ons deur die grens is van Angola af Namibië in. My hart groet Angola met so ligte laagie van hartseer, maar met baie dankbaarheid. Daar is vir ons 'n groot area waar ons weer in 'n laer trek en die manne maak dadelik 'n "bonfire" in die middel na ons op geslaan het. Almal is vreeslik opgewonde want dis die laaste aand wat ons almal by mekaar is, voor elkeen sy eie rigting gaan.



22 September 2022

Ons is twee motors wat uit Ruacana na Windhoek vertrek. Vandag split die mense elkeen in hul eie rigting. Ons drie, Oom Ockie, Andries en Rob ry saam. Die grens gaan vinnig en ons is lekker vroeg in Namibië in. Ons check in by Urban Camps in Windhoek.

23 September 2022

Ons vertrek vandag vanaf Windhoek, oor die grens na Kang in Botswana. Dis 'n lang pad maar ons trek in by Kalahari Rest Lodge toe die son nog in die lug is.

24 September 2022

Die volgende oggend is ons vroeg op en op die pad.
Oor die grens verwelkom ons land ons terug met load
shedding en potholes en tog voel ek verlig om weer te
behoort, hier in Suid Afrika. My moederland.

Ons het dit gemaak 14 dae. Angola, Lomba en terug.
Wat 'n uitputtende, amazing avontuur.



24 Askari Grafte – 24 Poppies

Eugene Liebenberg

Die merkwaardige verhaal van 'n 61 Meg - Ops Askari veteraan wat aan homself die taak opgelê het om die Askari gesneuweldes se grafte op te spoor en dit skoon te maak.



2 bomme. Die Majoor het darem ook 'n R4 gehad.

Na Askari moes ons daai Ratels terug ry states toe. Ek dink as ons daar sou bly sou niemand iets vermoed het nie. Maar ons wou terug bos toe. Daar waar ons kompanie was. Ons is toe per trein Windhoek toe. Vandaar 'n lift gekry Grootfontein toe en skrop toe daar slaapplek uit. Ons begin verneem oor transport Omuthiya toe vandaar sou ons weer lift soek na wherever ons tjommies in Angola was. Niemand het verstaan waar ons vandaan kom nie. Uiteindelik kry ons 'n lift. By Omuthiya het nog minder mense verstaan wie ons is en waarheen ons oppad is. Al die groot range was weg vir oorlog. Ons het nogal hard getry om terug Angola toe te gaan. Maar oo 'n dag hoor ons net Ratels Omuthiya binnery. Ons kon weer by ons kompanie

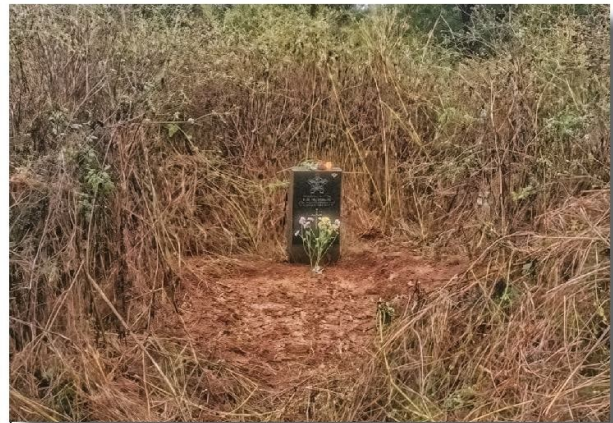


Sktr P D Pretorius

Ek was in Kapte Johan du Buisson se kompanie in 1 SAI Bn. Aan die begin van Ops Askari is ek en paar ander manne afgedeel aan daai G4 artillerie battery onder bevel van Ian Johnson. Die artillerie ouens het uitgeklaar en rofies het die wapens oor gevat. Die spul het daar aangekom sonder drywers. En omdat elke Ratel van ons kompanie 'n hulp drywer gehad is ons na die artillerie afgedeel waar ons redelik onwillig die bevelvoerders se Ratels moes bestuur.

Ons het Chahama en Cuvelai gebombardeer. Op 'n kol was ons in die doodsakker van die vyand. Dis daar waar die medic se Ratel deur 'n 130mm artillerie projekiel uitgeskiet is. Ek was bykans dag en nag wakker saam die Majoor. Ek moes wakker bky tydens aanvalle want die Ratel se batterye het pap geloop, dus moes ek die Ratel start om die batterye te laai sodat radios kon werk.

Ons het gereeld vreeslik baie indirekte vuur gekry. Die vyand het seker maar ons kanonne gehoor en dan na ons geskiet. 'n Senutergende gemors. Ons Ratel was onbewapen. Nie eers 'n 5.0 browning nie. Ek was die hoof wapen; my R4 en 1ste lyn ammo en 'n Rpg7 met



aansluit.

En so het ons dan einde 1984 uitgeklaar.

Die aanpassing in siwwie lewe was moeilik. Hoe verder die tyd aangestap het, hoe meer het die hele Askari gedoente vir my al hoe meer onwerklik geraak. Tot op 'n punt waar ek oortuig was dat Cuvelai net 'n nare droom was. Ter wille van helderheid het ek besluit om die grafte van die Askari gesneuweldes te gaan soek. Al sou ek net een graf kon opspoor, sou ek weet dat alles werklik was. Dit was om vir myself te wys alles het werklik gebeur het en ek nie heeltemal gek is nie. Ek moes weet. By die eerste twee grafte (Roets en Pearson) het ek nie eintlik aan die res van die mensdom gedink nie. Maar toe besef ek dat daar baie ander mense is wat ook wonder, net soveel naasbestaendes wat dalk nie die vermoë het om by die grafte uit te kom nie.

ONS AS LEDE VAN SEKTOR 10 WIL DEUR HIERDIE MEMORIAAL HULDE BRING AAN ONS MEDE-SOLDATE WAT MET HULLE LEWE MOES BETAAL TYDENS OPERASIE ASKARI VIR DIE SAAK VAARVOOR ONS VEG-SUIDER-AFRIKA. DIE VOLGENDE SOLDATE HET IN 'OPERASIE ASKARI' GESNEUWEL:

76901420	SP		A AURELIO	15/04/54 - 02/01/84
79526935	BT	ZLT	K CLAASEN	26/06/63 - 18/12/83
78467782	BT	SKTR	J C FOURIE	30/09/62 - 31/12/83
81251506	BG	RPN	B GEEN	16/12/65 - 04/01/84
82585233	BG	SKTR	H A HEYNS	17/02/61 - 04/01/84
80238660	BG	SKTR	G A LENNOX	16/10/64 - 04/01/84
78373362	BG	ZLT	P M LIEBENBERG	30/10/62 - 31/12/83
80211634	BG	SKTR	D A LOUW	31/10/64 - 04/01/84
81312464	BG	SKTR	G P LE ROUX	03/04/65 - 31/12/83
82475815	BG	KAV	N W NIEMAND	21/01/64 - 26/12/83
74217076	PE	SEKS	H A OOSTHUYSE	26/08/58 - 18/12/83
80490592	BQ	SKTR	L F PEARSON	13/12/64 - 04/01/84
79551099	BQ	SKTR	P D PRETORIUS	27/11/63 - 04/01/84
81065039	BQ	RPN	S PRETORIUS	06/07/65 - 27/12/83
81173254	BQ	RPN	D J SCHROENEN	02/04/65 - 31/12/83
81301293	BQ	SKTR	M C SMIT	18/03/65 - 31/12/83
80264575	BQ	O/KPL	W T STEENKAMP	30/07/64 - 04/01/84
79364600	BQ	SKTR	L J VAN RENSBURG	11/01/63 - 18/12/83
83890970	SWK	SKTR	A KAMUNGA	04/11/65 - 18/12/83
83890418	SWK	SKTR	E MASHIKA	22/02/63 - 18/12/83
81285504	BQ	SKTR	J L PRETORIUS	30/01/65 - 04/01/84
81553596	SP	SKTR	J DALA	05/04/54 - 10/01/84
80830409	SP	SKTR	I MALONOP	27/08/48 - 10/01/84
81059750	BQ	KPL	J H ROETS	20/03/65 - 23/01/84

DEFENCE INTELLIGENCE
DECLASSIFIED
2008-12-04
K.C. BLAUN

AS 'N PERSOON IN 'N OPERASIONELE-SITUASIE IN AKSIE GEDOOD WORD, KAN ONS OOK SE DAT HY 'N POSITIEWE STERWENSDAAD GELEEG HET VIR DIE VEILIGHEID VAN SY LAND EN SY MENSE. SO 'N PERSOON IS 'N HELD' - LT GENL J.J. GELDENHUIS - HOOF VAN DIE SA LEER.



2/Lt Piet Liebenberg



Dit was die begin van dekades van grafte soek. Die verwaarlosing van die grafte oor die land versprei het my diep geraak. Ek het dit my eretaak gemaak om die grafte skoon te maak, die bossies uit te skoffel en blomme op die graf te plaas. Ek het ook deur die ervaring en my handeling te deel, gehoop om van hulle mense wat agter gebly het in die hande te kry, en te laat weet dat ons daar is as daar hulp of iets nodig is.

So hulle kan darem sien hoe lyk alles deur my die fotos van die grafte. Hier en daar het wel iemand na vore gekom. Ook 'n pa. Ek weet nie of ek hom gehelp het of hy vir my nie, maar het vriende geword. En op 'n manier kan ons mekaar gesond maak of beter laat voel.

Aanvanklik het ek gedink daar was 17 gedood in Askari. Ek dink ek het die name op die 4 SAI Bn herinnerings muur getel en vergelyk met die name op die memorial by die oorlog museum. Maar nou ja, ek was verkeerd, iewers het ek die amptelike verslag in die hande gekry. Daar is amptelik 24 opgeskryf as DIA. Maar dis eintlik 24 +1, ene Schonenberg (jammer as ek verkeerd spel) het eers onlangs by gekom. Hy is die man wat in die sand storm dood gery is. Sy naam is op 61 Meg memorial by die museum.



Ek wou graag die 24 op 'n manier vereer. Toe laat ek 'n Poppy sticker maak met die nommer 24 op en dan Ops Askari en Lest we forget daarop. So het ek die plakkers op my motorfiets gesit. Ene op die tenk sodat dat ek die plakker heeltyd kan sien.

Ek is oor naweke 'n baie ywerige motorsport fotograaf wat meesal motorfiets renne afneem. Toe dink ek op 'n dag; hoekom vra ek nie die ryers en ook die renkar bestuurders om poppies op hulle voertuie en ook die motorfiets te sit nie?. Die idee is om 'n "living" memorial te bou. Met elke plakker wat ek uitgedeel het, kon ek ons storie vertel, jonk en oud. Ek glo hulle sal nou verder die storie vertel.

By die internasionale byeenkoms by Phakisa en Redstar het Michael Dunlop (21 keer titels gewen by Isle of Man) bygedra dat my Facebook Racing groep tot 470k impressions geklim het. Ek het die stats gery om die Poppy te adverteer. So het 'n hele paar van ons ryers die plakkers opgesit. Daar is so drie wat altyd die plakkers op het of hulle wedren ry of nie.

Die opwindende ding was toe onse AJ Venter, self 'n Isle of Man ryer, die plakkers op sy fiets gesit het. Die poppy en die herinnering van die gevallenes is aan



baie baie mense bloot gestel.

Ek voel nederig en blessed. Die rooi Poppie vir almal wat in oorloë geval het en die 24 vir Ops Askari. Lest we forget en ek is dankbaar dat mense nog na 'n ou soldaat se dinge wil luister.





Skr G A Lennox



L F Pearson



Shawn Pretorius



GP Le Roux se grafte Cullinan.

Die begrafplaas se hek was gesluit. Vaune Everington was vasbeslote om in te kom. Die was Kersdag 2021. Hy het toe maar vir die begrafplaas 'n tune gespeel. Daar is 'n infanteris in die kind



Die graf van M C Smit in Ladybrand.



Die begrafplaas in Ladybrand lyk maar woes. Het gedink ons gaan sukkel maar ons het die graf darem onder 'n uur gekry.



Ek en Vaune Everington het skoongemaak so goed ons kon. Ons wou nie die gras uitgrawe nie, die begrafplaas is lelik genoeg. 'n Bietjie groen gras en 'n paar veldblomme laat dinge 'n bietjie beter lyk. Op die man se grafsteen word 61 genoem. Tot dusver was



meeste grafte wat ek besoek het 4 SAI (Askari) gesê. Snaaks genoeg het ons die regte hemde aangehad vir 61. In elk geval goeie woorde is gesê en 'n gebed vir die agtergeblewenis. Blomme is geplaas (ek dink dis wilde blommetjies, het hulle sommer in begrafplaas gepluk). Dit was 'n lang dag maar ek is dankbaar dat ons dit kon doen.

Attie Van Der Walt

Baie dankie, my onbekende vriend! Smittie, glo my, het jou onbaarsugtige daad gesien! Nes hy 'n on-mooontlike klein mannetjie was! Ek het destyds vir Smittie opleiding gegee! Was destyds vir my baie erg om sy bebloede kit van sy voertuig te loop afhaal! Sy brains het nog aan die staaldak vasgesit! Moes Smittie se brains van my hande afspoel! Maak steeds seer, Boeta! Hoe de moer verwerk mens dit??



Kyk hoe mooi is Dave Muller se gerestoureerde “memorial” motorfiets met die Poppy 24 Askari.

Eugene Liebenberg



Dave Muller, has rebuilt this bike in memory of the Askari soldiers that gave their lives. He will be displaying it at the monthly meeting of the Classic bike club in Tara Road bluff from 12h30 to 17h00. It is a very entertaining afternoon. The category bikes to qualify to go on show are bikes from the Rising Sun built before 1979, and there is always various makes of bikes that the members ride to the club.

A fantastic and honourable achievement Dave. Salute my brother. We will remember them.

Robert Torrani



61 Mech Exco is busy developing a 61 Mech Ops Askari special numbered commemorative coin for the 40 years anniversary since the Ops took place. Below is a draft proof of the envisaged coin. The series number will be done below the 61 Mech VA emblem.

Manus Myburgh



3D



D=50mm

- Recessed metal
- Antique Silver Metal
- Black
- White
- 186 C
- antique gold

thickness:4mm

South African Cap Badges of Units participating in Operation ASKARI



Other Beret Badges



Shoulder patches of Participating Units



Shoulder patches of 61 Mechanised Infantry Battalion sub units



Information and set up by Dudley Wall.

Vriende tot in die Dood

Die term “Boesemvriend” dateer uit die laat 1500’s. Destyds het die boesem na die bors verwys as die setel van diep emosies. ’n Boesemvriend is dus iemand met wie jy hierdie diep gevoelens kan deel.

Uit die Bybel kry ons die voorbeeld van die boesem vriendskap tussen Rut en Naomie. Dawid en Jonathan was boesem vriende. Streng gesproke moes hulle vyande gewees het. Jonathan moes die troon opvolger van sy vader Saul gewees het, Maar Dawid sou die troon opvolger wees. Toe die nuus van Saul en Jonathan se dood aan hom oorgedra is het hy hulle in die “Booglied” besing. (25) Hoe het die helde geval diep in die geveg! Jónatan lê verslaan op jou hoogtes. (26) Ek is benoud om jou ontwil, my broer Jónatan! Jy was vir my baie lieflik; jou liefde was vir my wonderliker as die liefde van vroue. (27) Hoe het die helde geval en die oorlogswapens verlore gegaan! (2 Sameul: 1).

Of in die epiese gedig “The Epic of Gilgamesh” die vriendskap van Gilgamesh en Enkidu,

Hegte vriendskappe is ook in die Bosoorlog gesmeë. Sommige sal ’n leeftyd hou, ander weer het na uitklaar datum vervaag en verdwyn. Dit is dus besonders om van twee gevalle in die 61 Meg geskiedenis te lees van boesem vriende wat voor die militêr reeds hegte vriende was. Wat dit verder uniek maak; as hulle saam in dieselfde eenheid ingedeel word. Maar besonders is die verhaal as hulle saam sneuwel in die oorlog. Dit is die verhare van:

Roberto Nicola de Vito (19) van Boksburg en Andrew Madden (19) van Benoni.

Christo Francois Bezuidenhout {Boesman of Bushie} (20) en Jameson Bossé (19) van die Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis.

Roberto Nicola de Vito (19) van Boksburg en Andrew Madden (19) van Benoni. Ops Sceptic - Smokeshell



On 10 June 1980 thirteen young men from 61 Mechanised Battalion Group and 1 South African Infantry Battalion. They were Killed in Action or Died of Wounds during the attack on the SWAPO/PLAN Smokeshell Base complex during Operation Sceptic in Southern Angola. Their Ratel vehicles were systematically engaged and knocked out by a Soviet 23mm ZU-23-2 deployed together with three Soviet 14,5mm ZPU-1 Anti-Aircraft Guns, all being used in the ground defensive roll.

BOESEMVRIENDE SAAM OP GRENS DOOD

Eie Beriggewer

JOHANNESBURG. — Twee van die soldate wat aan die grens in 'n skermutseling met terroriste gesterf het, was boesemvriende wat mekaar reeds op skool leer ken het. Hulle is Roberto Nicola de Vito (19) van Boksburg en Andrew Madden (19) van Benoni.

Andrew se ma, Sally (44), ly aan suikersiekte en was gister in 'n baie slegte toestand. Haar een seun het pas teruggekeer van die grens af, nou is Andrew daar dood en in Julie moet die jongste Weermag toe.

„Die skok van Andrew se dood en die vooruitsig dat Hugh (18) my jongste seun,

binnekort met sy opleiding begin, kan dalk veroorsaak dat my vrou se skok vererger en sy in 'n koma raak.”

Mnr. Jim de Vito (49) pa van Robert, moes gister deur 'n dokter behandel word. Sy vrou Ailsa (39) het die pers te woord gestaan en gesê dis vir hom 'n

bittere slag.

Die jong Madden en De Vito was volgens hul families boesemvriende wat oor en weer bymekaar gekuier het. Hulle het saam hul diensplig begin en Andrew se pa sal vandag met die De Vitos gesels oor die moontlikheid dat die twee saam begrawe word.

Madden, HP Ferreira, R N de Vito, N Ogelvy, M Caforio, M. French



7395813BG Rifleman Roberto Nicola de Vito. He was 19. He was standing up in the left side hatch throwing hand grenades into enemy positions when he was struck by a burst of 14,5mm Anti-Aircraft cannon fire that severed him in two, killing him instantly. Unfortunately, a M26 hand grenade he was about to throw, fell through the hatch and exploded inside the Ratel.

76325646BG Rifleman Andrew John Madden. He was 19. He was critically wounded in the neck and back by shrapnel from the exploding grenade. He received expert medical attention in the field and was evacuated from the area but succumbed to his wounds at 20h00 that evening, approximately 5 hours after being wounded.



10 June 1980

Call sign 9G, 10 June 1980 Shot out by 23mm and 14.5mm with a resulting hand grenade explosion inside. Happened during the attack on the SWAPO Smokeshell Base complex during Ops Sceptic.



Christo Francois Bezuidenhout {Boesman of Bushie} (20) en Jameson Bossé (19) van die Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis.



**40 Jaar gelede: Gedenksteen eer die
lewens van twee Volkies wat in
Grensoorlog sterf**

Operasie Phoenix

Dit was 'n bekende strategie van SWAPO om gedurende die reenseisoen sy spes magte na die boerdery gebied suid van die Owambo grens en die Etosha wildtuin te infiltreer om aanvalle teen die plaaslike bevolking te loods.

61 Meg Bataljon Groep het dan onder bevel van Sektor 30 met sy hoofkwartier op Otjiwarongo ondersteuning aan die SWA Polisie en Areamageenhede (Kommandos) gebied om in militêre optrede teen hierdie infiltrasies SWAPO se aanslag die hoof te bied. Bo en behalwe die gebruiklike soek en vernietigings operasies was klein groepies van 2-3 man op plase ontplooi om beskerming aan gesinne en plaaswerkers te bied.

Gedurende die eerste vyf weke van Operasie Phoenix was daar geen aksie in 61 se verantwoordelike gebied nie. Die Etosha wildtuin was aktief gepatrolleer maar is geen spoor van enige vyand gevind nie.

Gedurende hierdie periode was 'n plaas in die boerdery gebied aan ons oostekant aangeval en twee kanoniere (artilleriste) wat ontplooi was vir plaasbeskerming, anonniers C. F. Bezuidenhout en J. Bosse, word dood geskiet.

Op Sondag 6 Maart 1983 het tussen ses en tien Swapo terroriste Christo Francois Bezuidenhout (Boesman of Bushie) en Jameson Bossé op die gasteplaas Vergenoeg oorval. Die eienaar het hulle gehuisves in 'n chalet buite die veiligheids omheining. Hulle het gesit en kaart speel met net hulle swart PT broeke aan. Hulle is op teregstelling styl doodgeskiet. Na hulle dood het spoorsnyers afgelei die Swapo's het hulle



vir 'n rukkie dopgehou by die chalet. In die opvolg operasie is die hele groep Swapos gejag en gedood. Vergenoeg is naby Oshivelo op die regterste onderkant van die Etoshapan geleë, omtrent 112 km noordwes van Tsumeb en onder die rooilyn van destyds. Hulle was boesemvriende, saam in Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis, saam in Potch Hoër Volksskool, saam in die Weermag, saam op die grens, saam kaart gespeel en saam gesterf.

Boesman en Jameson het die plaas bewaak in opdrag van die Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag. Hulle is op kort afstand teen 'n gebou buite die veiligheidsheining van die plaas, geklee in hul PT-broeke en besig om kaart te speel, vermoor. Hulle twee is direk na skool Weermag toe.

Boesman was 20 jaar oud toe hy 14 dae voor sy mondigwording doodgeskiet is. Jameson was 19 jaar oud. Die gebroke huise waaruit hulle gekom het, het hulle saam in die Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis op Potch geplaas. Boesman was hoofseun en Jameson onder hoofseun van die Abraham Kriel Kinderhuis op Potchefstroom. Albei net in 1981 aan die Hoër Volksskool gematrikuleer. Beide was uitmuntende rugbyspelers. Boesman 'n skrumskakel en Jameson 'n buitensenter. Beide het vir Wes-Transvaal se Craven-weekspan gespeel. Beide het in 1982 aangemeld vir diensplig en is as artilleriste opgelei.



Mental Health

The Construction Of Meaning In Spatial Settings

Nicky Dickson

I have long wondered what it is like for our veterans to return to the soil and sites of encounter from the border war. Graham, my husband, first journeyed back to the border regions of Namibia and Angola in 2009. He returned with a larger group the following year, 2010. Each time he returned home he would tell of the ways in which veteran's lives seemed changed as a result of a trip back. There was the story of a veteran whose 40-plus year-old nightmares stopped happening. There was the telling of experiences and stories, sometimes for the first time ever, and the impact of shared tears around campfires. And then there was the catch-up stories after these trips in which veterans would tell of feeling somehow changed - of being emotionally 'lighter' for having made the trip back and how, sometimes, unhelpful coping mechanisms were abandoned.

A few years later, an article in the South African magazine *Huisgenoot* (21 June 2018:313), titled "Gene-singsreis in Angola" came to my attention. Written by Deon Lamprecht, the article documented the experiences of going back with phrases such as:

- "Ek is bly ek kon hier wees om behoorlik tot siens te sê"
- "Ek was voorheen negatief en hartseer. Dit het vir my emosioneel baie beteken om hier te wees"
- "Ek is rustig in my gemoed... 'n sirkel is voltooi"

These stories shared in the article reminded me of the kinds of stories Graham had shared and I started wondering what it was about going back to Namibia/Angola that seemed to be so powerful? I wondered in what ways young soldiers' lives had been informed and impacted forever by these places of powdery, dusty sand, of scrubby bush, of shona pans and fields of mahangu. Cultural anthropologist, Barbara Myerhoff, suggests that people don't merely 'inhabit' space, but 'inscribe' themselves on it. I wondered if this was true.

In July 2022 (after 2 postponements due to Covid), my journey back to Angola with a group of veterans hap-

pened. I was curious to bear witness as some of the veterans and survivors of Operation Sceptic returned to Smokeshell. I had read the accounts of the 10 June 1980 and had been privileged to have conversations with several veterans beforehand, but this trip would actually take us back to the soil. 42 years and one month later I found myself sharing in the journey of returning to the co-ordinates documented by General Dippenaar, with some of those young soldiers and rank, now men in the latter years of their lives.

As we disembarked to set up camp on the site on 9 July, a small group of veterans, who personally bore some of the brunt of the ambush on that day back in June 1980, seem pressed to start an important walk back to the identified site of encounter. I was fortunate to be allowed to tag along. I have come to call this experience 'sacred'. I was silently witnessing what, in my own words, was both an urgency and a hesitancy. The banter turned to silence as the destination came closer, save for the crunching of dry grasses underfoot. We reached a clearing which still holds the remnants of shrapnel and shell casings from that day.

I watched the searching for familiar landmarks, regardless of the years that have passed, and the landscape of vegetation that had inevitably changed. I listened to the retelling of stories and the sketching of a Ratel on the barren soil as two veterans tried to remember direction and soldier placement back on that day. I noticed the moments of deep emotion, of tearful hugs and the moments of silence as each returned to painful memories of that day. At some point both walked away from each other to pray and to be alone with their thoughts. I wondered if they, like me, noticed the barren, scorched earth that remains to this day, as if holding memorial to the 12 lives lost there. Later, around the campfire, we talked about some of the demons that they took back to civvie street after this operation.

I listened to the early morning banter after a restless

night. There are those who chose to sleep outside, under the stars – the same stars, in the same sky from a lifetime ago. There was a hypervigilance present to everything happening in daily life around us.

I shared in a memorial ceremony for the young soldiers whose lives were lost, and indeed, for the men whose lives were forever changed here. All of this takes place under the watchful eye of the lone bateleur circling overhead. Some of the Smokeshell veterans later speak of experiencing a sense of peace.

Every behaviour, feeling or thought occurs in the context of a particular environment, and what is experienced is often determined based on the particular place in which the experience occurs. Identity to place really does seem to come from beliefs, meanings, emotions, ideas and attitudes assigned to a place.

Some of the questions I'm left thinking about are:

- How does place forge identity for the survivors of war?
- What effect does returning to places have on

people? How might the meaning of place change over time for people, especially after a returning?

- How might some places be experienced as enabling different ways of being?
- What is the invitation to us to listen more carefully for implicit and explicit references to spaces and places in our conversations with people and the possibility this may open for change and healing?

The sense of connection to both places and objects is recorded in myths, poems, folk tales and historical writings. Such symbolic experiences signal man's need for meaningful relationships and curiosity about experiences that define their identity and subsequent mastery of their environment and the world around.

In closing, I'm curious what you think the relationship between a soldier and the soil is?

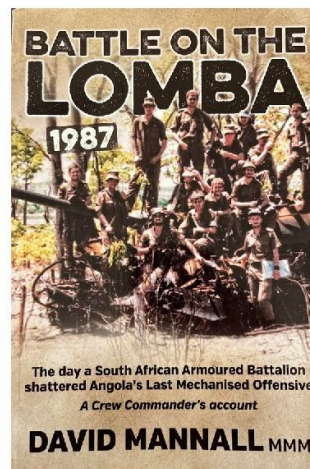
I would love to hear your thoughts and personal experiences. Please feel free to contact me on nickydickson@mweb.co.za

Book Review

Johan de Lange

I wasn't Mech Infantry. When I was preparing for my matric exams I heard what 61 Mech achieved during Modular and what followed late 87. Four months later I was at another Tempe base with our platoon sergeants telling us about the 'groot kak' happening up north and that we better take things seriously. Later in my 2 years during a night in Pretoria, I first came across the name Cuito Cuanavale - graffiti painted on a big wall surrounding a house on your way out of the city to the north. It had a spooky ring to it but I was none the wiser. And despite reading some technical books on the topic over the years, that's in a way how it stayed. That was until I finished David Mannall's book. His story of the battle on 3 October 1987 through the eyes of a 90mm armour guy at the front of the front-line with Ratels, continuously moving backwards and forward around T55s for a day long battle is mind blowing. It's almost as if you are there to witness the diesel, dust and guts in the hot sun with a bunch Natal surfer boy Souties and Boertjie teenagers, punching in a weight class none of them could have contemplated a few months before. The book, the story

and personal impact it clearly had on young lives kept me awake most of last night. That's why I had to write this now. To say 'respect and salute' or 'thank you for your service' to these guys doesn't feel good enough. It is almost as if there aren't really words to describe the appreciation you guys are due from all your comrades and the rest back home who had no clue. All heroes. Thank you.



A Story of Faith and Perseverance 'n Verhaal van Geloof en Volharding

H P Ferreira

Ops Smokeshell – 43 Years ago

Cmdt J Dippenaar

In terms of the information at our disposal, the target consisted of 13 active complexes that were spread over an area of 3×12 km, but we did not know the composition of the enemy at each complex.

These complexes had no physical features to assist with the navigation or to define the lines of attack of the combat teams. We therefore planned to attack from the east flank and capture each of the complexes one by one until the complexes were under our control, instead of approaching the complexes from the front.

We were also informed that the enemy was not dug in but above the ground and that they would scatter as soon as the attack on their positions started. This information was wrong, because combat team 2 under command of Captain Louis Harmse was caught by surprise when dug-in 23 mm anti-aircraft guns fired at the attacking Ratels from an unexpected direction from a short distance while being used in a ground role instead of an anti-aircraft role. It then also transpired that SWAPO had trenches and bunkers on the objective, which were well camouflaged and defected. This unexpected anti-aircraft fire sadly caused the first casualties for 61 Mech in battle (KIA), and the loss of these soldiers caused great sorrow and shock.

Mistaken Identity of a Wounded Soldier

The evacuation of the soldiers that were killed and wounded happened in a controlled manner and their details were reported to Sector 10 headquarters. Rifleman HP Ferreira from Theunissen in the Free State was reported as dead, while in fact he was wounded. The Commander of Section 10, Brigadier Witkop Badenhorst, brought it very firmly to my attention the next day that we had made a mistake with the evacuation reports, because Rifleman HP Ferreira was still alive and recovered from 23mm and 14,5mm shots through his waist and stomach.

I visited Rifleman Ferreira at 1 Military Hospital afterwards and was again impressed by the spirit and

calibre of our soldiers. I cannot remember how many operations he had to undergo, and how he was handling the situation that he had to go through in his later years, but what I do know is that the hospital management used him to be an example and motivator to other patients in distress.

H P Ferreira (2009)

Paul Louw was ons peletonbevelvoerder gewees, en ek was die drywer van ons peletonhoofkwartier se Ratelmet die roepsein 21. Ons was die voorste voertuig gewees. Daarso was merkers by die paadjie waar ons moes afdraai. In daai stadium was 'n ou maar op jou senuwees, jy het nie geweet wat gaan gebeur nie. Paul het gereken da tons vuur sou trek 400 meter aan. Op 200 en iets meter, toe trek ons vuur. Ons was met my voertuig vorentoe en ons is deur die basis. Ons het omgedraai in die basis, die vuur het net al meer en meer geraak. Die volgende oomblik toe kom ek agter my Ratel is aan die brand.

Ek het die Ratel se deure oopgemaak, maar ek kon nie uitkom uit die drywersitplek nie. Loubser, ons seiner, het skuins lanks my gesit op daai trappie. Ek kon sien hy was dood. Ek het hom probeer uitkry, maar ek kon nie. Toe het die ammunisie in ons Ratel begin afaan. Ek weet self nie hoe ek daai toring weggekry het nie, maar ek was deur die drywer se hatch.

Ek het in dekking ingegaan en Paul het vir my die lugafweerkanon uitgewys. Toe ek opstaan toe is die ander lugafweerkanon hier voor my. Dit is toe ek gevoel het ek val, ek het net gesien die ou kyk vir my en die volgende oomblik toe het ek gelê.

Daarna het ek bietjie reggekom en toe ek weer beweging voel, toe skuif ek weer en toe het hulle my gegryp en na die mediese Ratel toe gesleep. Ek weet nie hoe lank dit gevat het nie. Ek weet nie presies wat gebeur het nie, dit is sulke flitse wat terug kom na 'n ou toe. Ek is gewond, daai chopper het my kom optel. Ek het wakker geword in Pretoria. Ek was van 1980 af amper tot in 1982 in die hospitaal gewees. Dit was hard maar ek het nie besef wat in my lewe eintlik

gebeur nie. Ek het baie operasies gehad. Die afgelope Desember wat verby (2009) is het ek die 89ste keer narkose gehad. Wat vir my wonderlik is, is dat daar Iemand groter is as wat ons besef.

Ek het na hierdie skietwonde kanker gehad. Ek is genees daarvan, ek het in 2002 gangrene in altwee my bene gehad, maar hier staan ek vandag.

HP back to the Battlefield after 42 years **10 June 2022**



Colon specialists would be the best specialists to deal with him. A series of tests were carried out in Bloemfontein, with the results being sent to these doctors. Telephonic consultations were also carried out.

Then on 16 February HP booked into Donald Gordon for further tests by numerous specialists. They have been totally honest with him and explained all possibilities with him. The unfortunate reality is that damage done during a previous operation cannot be reversed at this stage. He will probably have to wear

Buddies will be Buddies

Andrew Whitaker
2 March 2023

While fund-raising for veterans is a hot topic (The Anton Larkins saga), sadly for the wrong reasons, maybe it's time to give some feedback on HP Ferreira. HP uses his medical fund where possible and 61 Mech have stepped up to help where not covered and for ancillary costs.

On 13 January 2023, HP and his wife Phia, were flown to Johannesburg for a consultation with Dr Damon Bizos, a surgical gastroenterologist and head of surgery at Donald Gordon Medical centre. It was decided that Dr Bebinger and Dr Taylor, both

a colostomy bag for the rest of his days. The other damage would require a 10 -12 hour operation, never previously performed. I think we need to understand that not many people survive being shot through the stomach by a 14.5 mm anti-aircraft round at virtually point blank range. Anyway recovery from such an operation would be 2 - 3 months in hospital. HP was put through a series of tests to determine whether he could in fact even have such an operation. He passed



with flying colours, lungs are strong and he is fit. The young Physio was exhausted after his workouts with Hennie.

But, here comes the crunch, the likelihood of success stands at 35%. The problem here is that if unsuccessful he dies, as simple as that. HP and Phia have a really big decision to make and they have gone back to Bloemfontein to discuss with family and their church leaders. We paid them a surprise visit this past weekend. He is in a good space mentally and I think appreciates that they have all the information available. It is my opinion that he will not at this stage go ahead with the operation, although there will be some surgery to get him a more comfortable colostomy bag, skin graft from his thigh to try and close the hole in his back and potentially fix some spine damage and neck damage. He will continue to be monitored and if he finds his health deteriorating will reassess the situation about the operation.



I think it's important to understand that for the first time in nearly 43 years, he actually understands exactly where he stands and can make informed decisions.

Hennie is optimistic as usual. He carries on with his life. On 18 March he was the guest speaker at a 32 Bn gathering.

It's also appropriate to thank the 61 Veterans Association for their support, without which this would not have been possible. I'm going to also thank certain people and hope I don't miss out on anyone, if I do I apologise it's not intentional.

Firstly and most importantly Phia. You are HP's rock,

wife of 38 mostly tough years, breadwinner, nurse, confidant. As many have said before - Angel. You went into this with full knowing of what lay ahead. Respect.

Piet Terblanche, old Sergeant Major, who started a Smokeshell veterans pray group.

Ds Fanus Hansen, who started a 61 prayer group.

All the Smokeshell brothers, and particularly those from Bloemfontein, that have been there for HP at all times.

Tony Op't Hof, who assisted with transporting HP and Phia in Johannesburg.

Wolf, sorry can't think of your surname, who visited HP for 5 hours on the Monday, in hospital.

Nicole Dickson who visited him on Tuesday.

Deon Sebastian Lamprecht who visited on Wednesday and Gareth Rutherford on Thursday. Your visits were all very special to them.

All 61 veterans and others that have joined the prayer group.

With all of your support and the Ferreira faith, this is not over by a long shot



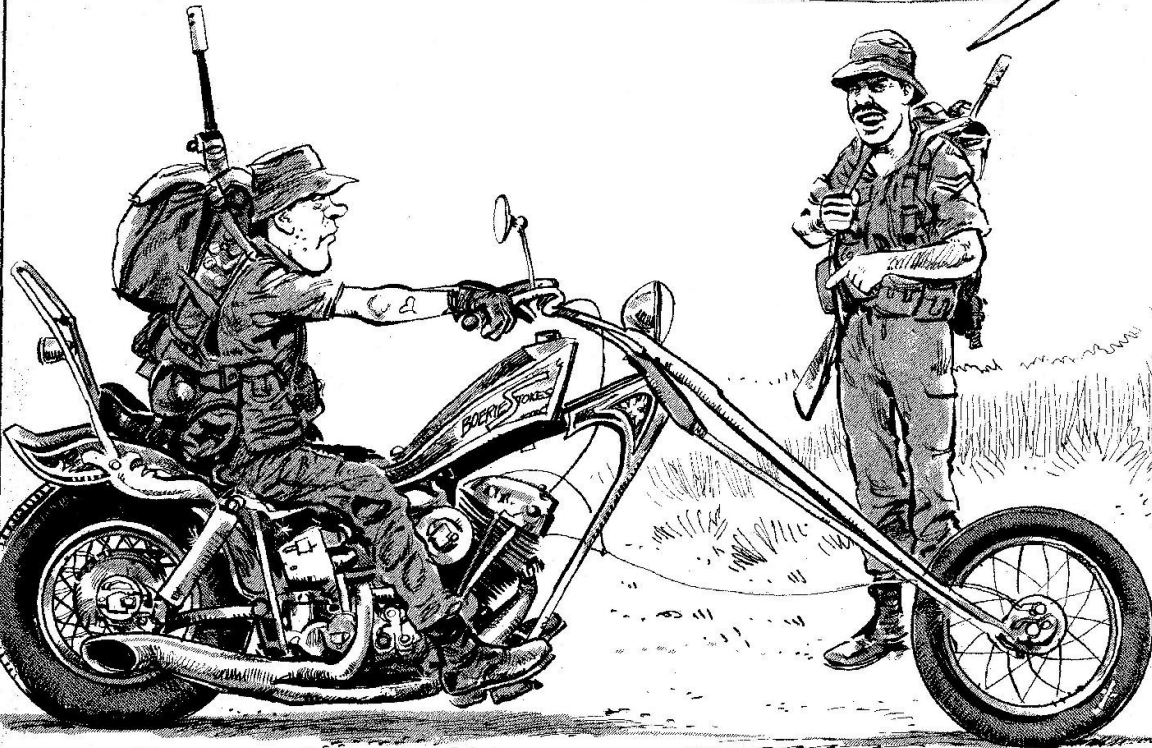
Andrew Whitaker

Great get together of a small group of Smokeshell vets in Bloemfontein 25 February. Good to get HP and Phia out for a bit of relaxation after a tough week of medical tests. Thanks Pieter Evert for providing the venue. Remake of original Smokeshell shirts making



Toffie

*Maak nie saak dat jy hom 43 jaar terug
met jou Bospay gekoop het nie Toffie.
Hy kan nie in die 61 Museum
vertoon word nie.*



*Hoe sluit ek by die
61 Riders aan?*

Kontak vir Toffie Grove.

Met apologie en erkenning aan Len Lindeque

LEN LINDEQUE
PARATJUS • JANUARIE 2013

Situation Report - Community Safety

Roland de Vries

Be Prepared

... It is time for us as law-abiding-peace-loving citizens to dust off our contingency plans rather urgently hope for the best, plan for the worst!

Is the writing on the wall ... those clear signs that something unpleasant or unwelcome is going to happen?

Think about it ... will an inverter or fuel driven generator save our bacon ... if the failing electricity grid of our dear dilapidated Eskom should collapse suddenly this possibility is a huge perhaps ... and if a few other evil wrongdoings following in the aftershock of the darkness should precipitously raise its ugly head ... such as the maddening crowds, the poor, and the destitute, recklessly start storming unguarded streets and vulnerable homes.

What will not work if the lights go out?

Here is a conservative list of the few bare necessities which will casually fall by the wayside if the power goes pffft - goodbye to all those nice necessities in the blink of an eye, that is: Firstly commercial food production and distribution. The collapsing of financial institutions and automatic teller machines; cell phones and network systems; fuel depots and stations; railway networks; the delivery of consumer goods and vital resources and commodities by rail and road; water, electricity, and sewage systems; traffic lights; hospitals and medical care centres the list continues in ad infinitum!

What about our families and all those good people we care about What about our children in schools and creches, elderly people in retirement homes and the weak and unwell cooped up in medical centres – those small vulnerable spaces it is not so easy to escape from?

What about all the good people in our country, who have the right to live and to do so safely and prosperously ... it is all those good people the so-called ruling criminal cartel does not give a hoot about!

The right to life is the most basic, the most fundamental, the most primordial and supreme right which human beings are entitled to have and without which the protection of all other human rights and their dignity become meaningless.

To my reasoning fleeing to Witsand or any other obscure place is not an option. You will not have enough fuel to make flight, neither adequate first-field dressings, drinking water and toilet paper to do so gracefully!

There are many excellent guides to be followed if the grid should suddenly collapse and in the advent of anarchy ... take time to do some clearheaded thinking and do some foreword planning for self, family and friend.

Yes, this list is not too difficult to make for yourselves: Alternative power supply, fuel reserves and water reserves; basic rations, toiletries and medical supplies for three months; basic camping supplies for setting up camp; hard cash or a few Kruger Rands on hand; alternative means of communication; maps and compasses if electromagnetic means should fail; alternative sewage systems and so on!

Yes, have your emergency plans for families and communities worked out well in advance for a change. Also, those plans to safeguard communities purposefully if the need should arise. Do so proactively when the danger signs are already clear; do not wait for the proverbial thing to hit the fan!

Hullo, let us for a moment dwell on the shocking news of criminal cartels causing havoc at Eskom daily; with its wicked tentacles connected to high-ups in government! Contemplate cause and effect

So what is new ... it is clear for all to see that the underlying threat against South Africa – one which has become almost completely obscured by the current political in-fighting - is the looming possibility of an overthrow of law and order by criminals, which would

include not just ordinary looting but also incitement to commit more deeds of wrong-doing and outright acts of terror.

Ill-fated governance by the ANC for almost three decades and the outcomes of its sombre policy have caused an economic crisis in South Africa, the collapse of investment, collapse of the power grid, poor economic growth, and the further deterioration in living standards. These mirror the chaotic state of governance and mismanagement in public administration and poor service delivery by the many district and local municipalities under ANC control. It seems that the ANC government does not have the ability – or perhaps the will - to escape from its self-inflicted wounds of corruption and mismanagement.

South Africa is being held captive once again by the state's unrealistic restrictions, as for Covid-19 recently. This time for a state of disaster being declared stupidly and recklessly against the failure of the state to provide electricity to its people. Once again frustration, alienation, and anxiety among people of all classes in our society will hamstring our safety and economic growth with little prospect of an improvement in the foreseeable future.

It is relevant to look at the miracles which happened on the ground in KZN during the recent insurrection in July-August 2021. Ordinary peace-loving people from all stations in life worked and are still working together to protect themselves and support each other – law-abiding people of all colours and creeds who had and have taken control of their own safety and destiny.

It cannot be doubted that our only hope at this moment in time lies in self-protection, self-governance and securing own livelihoods, and to keep working together from the ground upwards to heal our land. Finding a fair and adequate political solution in which the government serves the citizenry, instead of the top-down current reality, is naturally the only accepted end-goal – but that is a medium- to long-term process, which cannot proceed until our present political-economic predicament and our safety requirements are being managed satisfactorily by ourselves.

Of course, we can do this!

The above scenario is a daunting one, but it is not insoluble. There is only one way to combat it, however, and that is for all our communities to brace themselves for a possible confrontation. One thinks of the old saying that God helps those who help themselves. If communities help themselves and their fellow communities, they can survive this threat not only to themselves but also to their children and grandchildren and we can do so in Faith!

The aforementioned ideal includes securing the livelihood and safety of all law-abiding-peace-loving citizens and ensuring the delivery of essential services and commodities, and adequate food resources. We therefore need to stand together for what is right and be strong in Faith! As such the community is a force to be reckoned with, which finds strength in the following words from the Bible: “Romans 15:1 – We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak and not to please ourselves ...”!

The healing of our land can only be achieved in close collaboration with our Heavenly Father, when our people are safe, relations are harmonised, and economic growth is obtained. Therefore, do not waver or falter or fear, form centers of strength and be strong in Faith’!

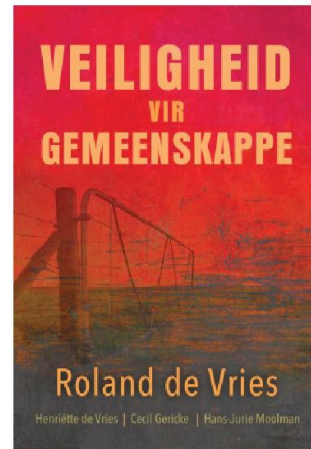
Get your baseline community safety plans sorted out soonest, do not wait for tomorrow! Get your contingency plans sorted out for the following soonest, do not wait for tomorrow:



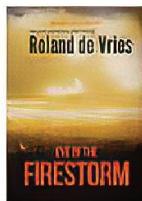
Image: SAFTU Media

- Political unrest, illegal road closures and escalation of political conflict.
 - Protection of schools, old age homes and medical centres.
 - Illegal trespassing and occupation of land and property.
 - Attacks and terrorism against families, farms and homes.
 - Protection of vulnerable points vital to the safety of our people.
 - Vehicle theft and hijackings, and armed robberies and cash in transit heists.
 - Wildfires, arson and for disaster risk management support.
 - Collapse of the power grid.
- “... as we advance into the terra incognita of tomorrow, it is better to have a general and incomplete map, subject to revision and correction, than to have no map at all (Alvin Toffler), 1991.”

May our Heavenly Father Bless South Africa and our people!



Genl-maj (Alt) Roland de Vries

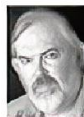


Eye of the Firestorm
ISBN 978-0-921912-5-2

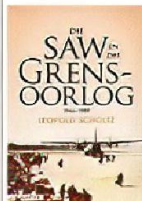
Die lewensverhaal van Roland de Vries handel nie net oor Oorlogvoering in Afrika nie maar ook oor die lewe, hoop, sekuriteit, bevry, lewenskap en transformasie. Die leser word telkens verras oor die Grensoorlog soos nuwe insigte gedetailleer word.

R150-00 (spesiale prys vir die geleentheid)

Uitgegee deur
naledi



Dr. Leopold Scholtz



Die SAW in die Grensoorlog 1966-1989
ISBN 978-0-424-05408-5 (Afrikaans)
The SADF in the Border War 1966-1989
ISBN 978-0-424-05410-8 (Engels)

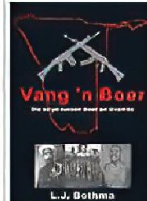
Die boek bevat 'n omvattende geskiedenis en analise van die Grensoorlog op strategiese, operasionele en taktiese vlak. Dit bevat grotendeels op argiewe navorsing.

R360-00

Uitgegee deur
Tafelberg



Dr. Louis Bothma



Vang 'n Boer: Die stryd tussen Boer en Ovambo
ISBN 978-0-220-54920-5

Vang 'n Boer – Die stryd tussen Boer en Ovambo, is die verhaal van twee volke waarvan die paale meer as 80 vóór die Grensoorlog/War of Liberation (1966-89) die eerste maal gekruis het.

R360-00

Uitgegee deur
L.J. Bothma

The Yellow Smokeshell Shirt

By: Andrew Whitaker

In July 1980, on our return to Omuthiya, we were each presented with a yellow T Shirt, with red trim. On the front was a badge and on one sleeve the word "SMOKESHELL" and on the other "10 JUN 80". From my recollection, the badge was intended to represent the various units that 61 was comprised of.



I think many of us have our original tucked away somewhere, but only a very few still fit as the quality wasn't very good and they shrunk substantially.

There was another T Shirt in the same colours for sale with a ratel, noddie car and artillery cannon on the front, with the year 1980 on it. I have since same with the year 1979 on it, so assume it was simply updated on an annual basis.

During the course of last year, a suggestion was made to have a remake done. It was difficult to get consensus on whether to go with a golf shirt or a T shirt, whether the badge or the vehicles. I think the only thing that everyone agreed on was the sleeves to be as on the original.

I took up the matter with 61 MVA and they got a

couple of quotes, but had difficulty getting the red trim included. I got permission to ask my sister to see if she could organise anything. She has an embroidery business in Empangeni. She came back with a quote from a lady who makes shirts and initially agreed to do the embroidery for free with the proceeds going to the 61 Fund-raising effort.

A sample was duly made and accepted as being a good quality by 61. Orders were taken for 34 shirts. Because they were custom made, we could make to order. So a mix of Golf shirts and T shirts were made. My sister then upped the donation, by paying for the shirts herself. This resulted in over R10 000 being raised for 61 veterans in need.

Since then we have orders for a further eight, and interest from a 61 Mech Ops Meebos veteran to have done for them.

So from a Smokeshell get together perspective, we have a new uniform.

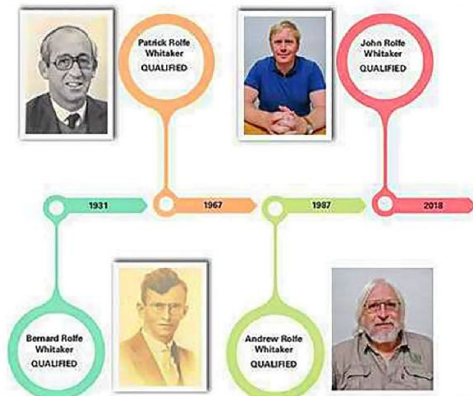


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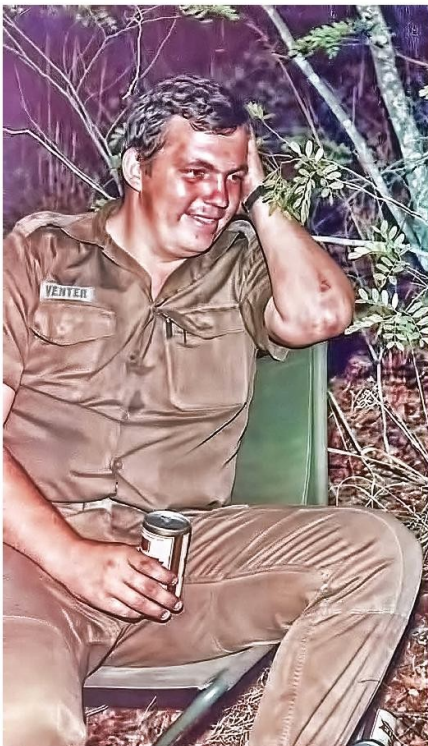
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Die Seintroep 1986/1987

Deur: Marius Venter



My twee jaar as die Seintroep bevelvoerder by 61 Meg is van my kosbaarste herinnerings in my loopbaan. Toe ek van my verplasing gehoor het, was ek en Annemarie baie opgewonde. Dit sou 'n groot voorreg wees om te 61 te dien. Hier het ek die geleentheid gehad om elke faset van Sein in 'n oorlog situasie te beleef. Ek en Annemarie het op??? in Tsumeb aangekom. Ons het huis/karavaan....??? betrek. Dit sou ons tuiste wees vir die volgende twee jaar. Ons het sommer gou tuis gevoel tussen 'n klomp ander gesinne. Hierdie geslote gemeenskap in die klein dorpie van Tsumeb het mekaar bygestaan deur dik en

The signal building was built towards the end of 1981. Was involved in its construction remember it well. I recall the following seiners being involved: Putter, Swart, Bodell, Goldin, Karuz & Liebenberg.

Peter Morris



Sean McSweeney 1982 en 1983



dun. Dit was veral waardevol as die mans soms vir maande aaneen iewers ontplooi was en die gesinne alleen agtergebly het.

Ek het op 1 Jan 1986 by Daan Goosen oorgevat. Daan was by 61 Meg van 1983 tot einde 1985. Voor Daan was Sean McSweeney in 1982 en 1983 die Seintroep bevelvoerder. Charles Schutte het einde 87 by my oorgeneem as Seintroep bevelvoerder. Ek was op die regte tyd inverplaas om my voor te berei vir Ops Modulêr. Ek het die geleentheid gehad om die hele jaar 1986 my voete te vind. Met die aanbreek van Ops Modulêr het my Seintroep soos 'n geoliede masjien gewerk.

Chris du Toit was by Seintroep Onder offisier. Frans Gunther het in 87 by Chris oorgevat. Eric Kahn was van 1982 tot 1985 die Seintroep Onder Offisier.

Chris du Toit was 'n kranige Rugbyspeler. Sy hut was sowat 20 meter vanaf my hut af, in die sirkel tente wat B Komp se 2/Lt'e gehuisves het in die Oosbasis. Chris het hard gewerk – en hard gespeel. Soms te entoesiasies. Een aand wou hy die jong korporaals wys hoe om te scrum. Dit was in die kroeglokaal van die Country Club. Die plek het die volgende oggend gelyk of 'n orkaan dit getref het. Kmdt Smit het nie gedink dit was net onskuldige sport nie. Kort daarna is Chris Windhoek toe verplaas.

Dawid Lotter



Tydens TEIN ontplooiing was die seintaaik maklik genoeg. Elke sub-eenheid het 'n seiner gehad wat die basiese fout opsporing en kabel herstelwerk kon doen. Met die terugkeer na Omuthiya is die uitrusting dan omgeruil op 'n een-tot-een grondslag. Maar in die konvensionele rol was dit 'n heel ander storie. Die Veggroep het soms honderde kilometer diep in Angola inbeweeg. Ons was hoogs mobiel en moes begroot vir elke moontlike sein probleem wat mog ontstaan. Ekstra radios, borskas wisselskakelaars, batterye vir die manpak radios, Ratel antennas en dit alles op wiele.

Met die aanbreek van 1987 was dit duidelik dat die jaar vele uitdagings sou inhou. Die gerugte van oorlog diep in Angola het gestalte gekry toe elemente van Sierra Bty ontplooi het. Toe ontplooi 61 Meg na Bittersoet buite Rundu. Ons het geweet dat dit net 'n



kwessie van tyd was voor ons die grens sou oorsteek. Op 30 Aug 1987 kry ek marsorders. Op 1 September is ons toe oor die grens. Die aanmars was 'n sein nagmerie. Met voertuie wat oor afstande van honderde kilometers ver strk, raak kommunikasie moeilik tot onmoontlik. Toe RSM Kemp se eschelon opvang by Luenge kon 9F19, die Sein logistieke voertuig al die ondiensbare seinuitrusting omruil. Enige verdere behoeftes sou later per konvooi of lug na Mavinga gestuur word. Vanaf 10 Sept tot laat November het die gevegte mekaar opgevolg. Ek is baie trots daarop dat die 61 Seiners altyd kon voorsien. Een voorval wat my altyd sal bybly is die "verlorer" van 9F19.

Die 9F19 storie



9F19 was die Sein Operasionele Logistieke Kwê. Dit was noodsaaklik dat hy deel vorm van die OC pakkie en het altyd saam met ons beweeg. En die OC Ratel het op sy beurt weer altyd by of naby die 0 Ratel beweeg. Ons Ech voorraad was by RSM Kemp gedra. Tydens 'n aanvulling moes 9F19 toe terug na die RSM Ech om al die stukkende voorraad te gaan omruil vir diensbare voorraad. Kais Nel, Komp Samjoor van A Komp was in beheer van die terugtog na die echelon toe. Ek het normaalweg baie lig geslaap en spesifiek om seker maak dat 9F19 terug is sodat ons die volgende oggend kon aangaan met die belangrike herstelwerk wat nodig was. 9F19 het nie daardie aand teruggekom nie, en ek het later toe maar aangeneem hulle is iewers in die laer en sal die volgende more by ons aansluit. Die volgende more het ons op die BHF net geroep, geen antwoord van 9F19 nie. Ek het toe vir Kais Nel gekry en gevra oor 9F19 en volgens hom moet 9F19 iewers in die laer wees. Toe begin die groot soektog, geen 9F19 in die laer nie, en niemand het die hulle gesien nie.

Ek moes toe vir Bok Smit inlig. Een van die troepe sê toe, ons moet hulle dalk op Radio 5 se frekwensie roep, want die boggers het toe 'n TR 15 Hopper voor in hulle Kwêvoël geïnstalleer.

Die Gesprek

"9F19, 0C" – geen antwoord

"9F19, 0C" – geen antwoord

"9F19, 0C" – geen antwoord

"9F19, 0C" - (Radio 5 se frekwensie) 9F19 stuur oor

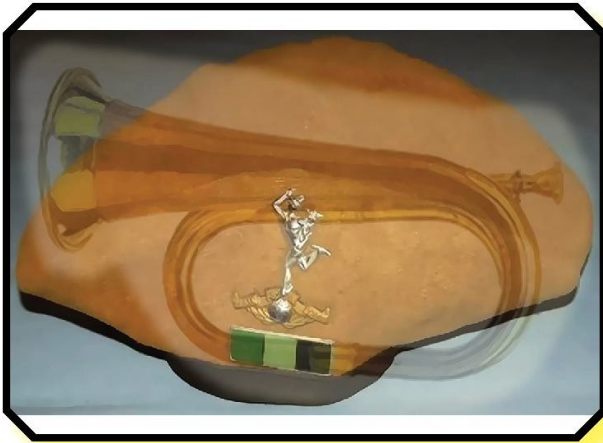
Slaak van verligting. Nou moes ons net uitvind waar is hulle. 9F19 het die laer verlaat om te voorraad optel

by die ech, Hulle het die voorraad by Frans Gunther gekry en was weer saam met Kais Nel op pad terug na die 61 Meg laer. Hulle het op 'n stadium agter geraak en moes, waar hulle moes regs draai, reguit aangehou en per geluk in die eie magte artillerie vasgery. Hulle besluit toe om daar te bly en die volgende oggend 'n plan te maak.

Nodeloos om te sê, ten spyte van die vyandelike Victor Victors, moes ons 9F19 gaan haal. Ons het die voorraad dringend nodig gehad. So het 'n onwettige TR 15 Hopper installasie, voor in 'n seiner Kwê, op 'n Radio 5 frekwensie gehelp dat ons die verdwaalde 9F19 opspoor.



Erkenning aan die Seiners van 61 Meg



waaroor 'n veldslag gaan – om mekaar te uitoorlê.

En om dit te kan doen moet bevele uitgereik word en snel begryp word. In die 1900's het groot massas soldate gesneuwel omdat die nuwe opdragte – te perd, die bevelvoerder te laat bereik het. Kyk maar na Balaclava, Islandlwana en soveel meer aan die Somme en Ypres, en soveel daarna.

Aan ons Seiners in die Bosoorlog, julle was besonders. Soms in die vuurllyn, soms nie, maar julle het die kommunikasies aan die gang gehou sodat ingeligte beslissings tydig gemaak kon word. Julle was die beulblasers soos van ouds om die boodskap deur te kry. Dit is waarom ek die beul as deel van die foto plaas.

Om bevel te voer in oorlog was nog nooit maklik nie. Na al die vooraf beplanning en inoefening kruis 'n mag die afmarslyn, en daarna (en daarvoor) tree die snel ontwikkeling van verrassing na vore. Dit is tog

Simbolies die beul rondom Jerigo se mure. ZERO CHARLIE

Dawid Lotter

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Six Months with Bravo Coy at 61 Mech – 1984

By Dawid Lotter

After Ops Askari

I participated in Ops Askari as the Alpha Coy commander. After the operation my soldiers returned to 4 SAI Bn. I returned to 1 SAI Bn and shortly afterwards returned to Cuvelai to serve with the Joint Monitoring Commission. In June 1984 I was transferred to 4 SAI Bn and given command of Charley Company.

To understand how C Coy became B Coy at 61 Mech, one must be aware of the rotation system between the three mechanised units i.e. 1 SAI Bn, 4 SAI Bn and 61 Mech.

Due to service at different units during the two year National Service, the mechanised companies adopted the designation allocated to them by the unit in which they served during a specific time. For example; During 1983 there were four Infantry Companies at 1 SAI Bn. A – D. So C Coy with the Coy Cdr as Louis Buys served as A Coy at 61 Mech during Ops Askari. After Askari they were C Coy at 4 SAI again and became B Coy for the last six months

of 1984 at 61 Mech. The reason for this was the fixed call sign Orbat of the specific unit. 61 Mech had equipment and Ratels for two mechanised infantry companies.

A Coy was CS 10 and their Ratels carried the call-signs 10 (Cdr) 11,12,13 (Pl Cdr) and then respectively per Pl eg 11A,11B,11C as the section Ratels. B Coy as above with the variation of CS 20, 21,22,23. When only one company was deployed at 61 Mech, the equipment and Ratels were alternated as the temporary companies were relieved. This was necessary to ensure that ALL the vehicles experienced equal wear and tear – and subsequently equal maintenance. Part of this B Coy was also under command 81mm Mortar Fire Group 2. CS 60. The Ratel 81 was not yet released. They used Ratel 20's.

Six Months

This story is about B Coy (C and A Coy's in previous phases) during those last six months of 1984. I



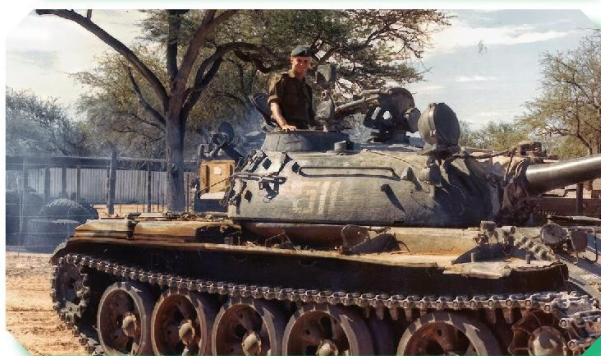
Fl.t.r - 2/Lt'e Cousins, Hudson, Holt, Snelling

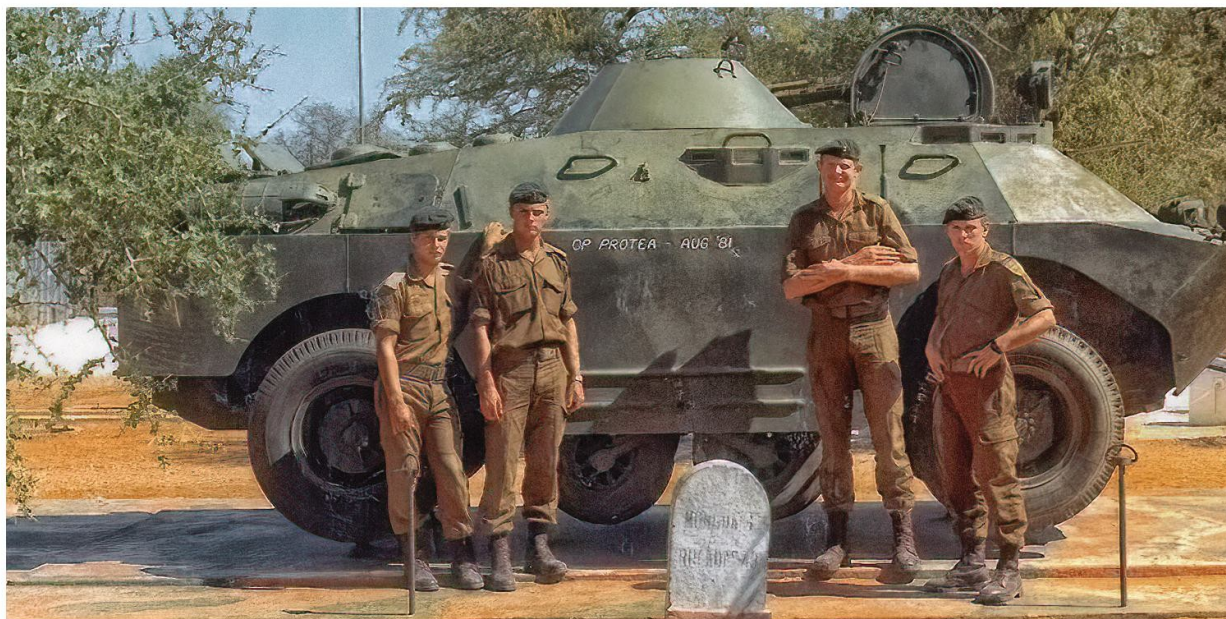
was transferred from 1 SAI Bn in May 1984 to 4 SAI Bn. I became the Coy Cdr of C Coy (4 SAI Bn). On my arrival at 4 SAI Bn the Coy was on leave. After leave we were deployed to 61 Mech as Bravo Coy. The Coy 2IC was Lt Peet van Zyl. Since AO J Kemp was already a permanent Coy Sgt-Maj at 61 Mech, the 4 SAI Bn CSM Sgt Mario Benneti did not deploy with us. When the members returned from their leave in 4 SAI Bn, we started to prepare for our deployment to 61 Mech. Our total strength, including the 81 mm Mortars, was about 170 soldiers.

We departed about middle June 1984. We were transported to AFB Waterkloof by civilian buses (Elwilerda) and flew in the normal Lockheed "Flossie" to Grootfontein. From there we departed with the "Wit Olifante" to Omuthiya.

The Soutie Company

The Coy was fondly referred to as the "Soutie" Company. This was due to all four the Pl Cdrs originating from the Natal Highlands and therefore English speaking. The so-called "Souties" (Anglikaners) had the annoying habit of questioning nearly everything. I am not referring to disobeying commands, they were too smart to step into such a trap. But the more junior and inexperienced from which the command came from, was exponentially equivalent to the basket of "Why"? They soon learned that "Why" did not fall favourably on my ears. "DO IT WHAT I TELL YOU AND ASK ME LATER WHY" I quickly learned to handle the questioning syndrome. It turned out to be almost some of the finest stock of junior leader group I ever had. To be held accountable afterwards was not such a bad experience.





The first week or so was consumed by signing for the Bravo equipment and vehicles. We were getting into mischief quite soon. The T55 tanks that were captured at Cuvelai 6 months prior gave us that opportunity. Lt J Jonker was in control of these tanks. I convinced him to take me and my Pl Cdr's for a spin on one of those tanks. And of we went onto the open area just north-west of the Omuthiya parade ground. And of cause we did not have radio contact with Omuthiya. The 61 Mech 2 IC, Maj Bok Smit heard the tank movement in the area. He was not happy. Nobody asked permission for this excursion (which he would have denied in any case). At last from frustration he sent a Ratel to stop the "exercise".

Me and my new CSM AO2 J Kemp had our differences about a few things. One that seemed irreconcilable was the parking of the vehicles in the sub-unit pre-deployment area. I insisted that the vehicles must be parked in such a way that should the alarm for deployment sounds in all earnest, they must be able to drive immediately. This requirement dictated that they drive in south and parking facing north. This was not a prerequisite for our predecessors from January to June 1984. And old habits die hard. So the Sgt-Maj Kemp wanted the vehicles to be parked in a straight line with their backs close to the B Coy showers. Thus in a west-east direction. This had the disadvantage of the parking of the Ratels after deployment or exercise to become a mayor manoeuvring exercise involving reversing into a space. Unable to get to an agreement, I just instructed him to do it my way. Problem solved.

Etosha Deployment

We had our first deployment north of the Etosha Game Reserve. It was in fact designed as a bit of re-training for command and control purposes. It turned out to be quite productive. We captured two Swapo terr's. Intelligence confirmed that it was a detachment commander and his medic/signaller. Capturing them was easy. They were tired and spent. When a whole company of Ratels descended on them, they must have thought that we know about them. They just stood up from behind their cover and surren-





der. The incident however had a ripple effect within the area, which was believed to be terrorist free. The platoon (I think it was PI 3) nevertheless was given a heroes reception back at Omuthiya.

Cuamato Deployment

Shortly afterwards we deployed into Angola on a show of presence operation to Cuamato. None of the planners expected any contact, but we were fully prepared. Nothing happened. One night we observed vehicle lights far away on the north axis formed by the dirt road adjacent to our hide. We shelled the position with our 81 mm Mortars. No response or further movement for that night was experienced. After a few detours in the area over the next few days we were re-



called to Omuthiya. The most memorable event for me was to bake a “potbrood” every day in my special cast iron pot that I liberated from Cuvelai months before. The road marker that we brought back to Omuthiya was placed in front of the B Coy offices.

Formal 40 Days Dinner

In September we conducted a formal dinner with lots of wine at Omuthiya. This was to symbolise “40 days”. Although we were still far from 40 days we made use of some slack time to do it. Who knew where we would have been in November? Apart from some serious hangovers the following day, it was an enjoyable event.





Oshakati

Just as base routine at Omuthiya was getting real monotonous, we held a very detailed Stable Parade on our combat equipment and signed it back to the main store. We also reconciled our ledger for all other equipment. The purpose of that was soon to be known. We had to deploy without our Ratels as the protection company for Oshakati.

It is worth noting that Oshakati was a medium sized town. The permanent military staff and their families lived there. So did all the other families of the government departments eg. Water Affairs, Agriculture etc.

Makalani Base

Our quarters was the old Marine Makalani Base. We were not the only occupants. A Citizen Force AA battery was also deployed there. Apart from their leader group, we saw little of the soldiers. They were deployed on the elevated towers on the Oshakati perimeters. When not on duty they slept in a sandbag bunker at the base of each tower. There were eight of these towers. Four with heavy AA guns, primarily in the ground role, and alternatively interspersed four towers with 106 recoilless guns. Oshakati town was quite big and the towers far apart. The task for B Coy was to patrol the perimeter fence on foot between these towers. Then also manning the two main entrance gates to the town.

The base consisted of a prefab office building with a sandbag extension, a corrugated shower block, and the kitchen and mess building. Then the blocks of tents.

The shower block provided hot showers which was driven by gas geysers. I can't recall if the platoons also used it, or if it was reserved for the leader group. It was an adventure to go for a shower. When you opened the shower tap, there was a 30 second delay, and then it started up with a loud bang. Only later did we find out that we used the wrong type of gas. Quite a risky situation.

Makalani was a health risk. The sewerage system did not have the required downward angle. The junction of the sewerage pipes crossed (underground) in the canteen area. Since the drains were blocked at least once a week, the sewerage tended to overflow in

the kitchen area. AO2 Kemp kept a hawk's eye on the system to lessen the possibility of disease. The leader group part of the dining hall was separated from the file with a wall of canvas.

Operation

Our 81 Mortar Fire-group manned the mortar pit's close to the Sector 10 HQ. Those were part of a pilot project. The pits had a series of acoustic detection clusters. The theory was that by triangular measuring of sound from an enemy stand of bombardment would give the accurate grid for the mortars for a counter bombardment. We never had the opportunity to determine if the theory was correct.

We maintained a three shift system. Forty members per shift (Platoon) every eight hours. With this we had a group for static duties e.g. gates etc., one group on escort duties; school buses, government officials etc. and one group in rest. The foot patrols did their rounds in battle fatigues. But the guards at the two main gates added to their attire shoulder flashes, putties and cravat. They really looked very neat. The sector 10 Sgt-Maj did not agree with this mixture of uniform pieces. I was adamant to keep it that way. He reported me to Brig Joubert. I think the Brig also liked the formal appearance. To appease the Sgt-Maj he agreed to keep it that way on a condition. If I could do a full shift as a gate guard with the same attire, it could remain. I accepted the challenge and until the last day of our stay at Oshakati, the gate guards were dressed in helmets, chest webbing and "Klappe en Flappe". Thinking back to those days I realise it was unnecessary. It was very hot and the humidity very high.

The Orphan

He first joined the guards at the main gates. They gave him food and allowed him to sleep in the guard house. He was about six years of age. It wasn't long before the guards smuggled him into Makalani Base. After futile efforts to trace his family, he became a full member for ration purposes. He became quite professional in polishing boots. At the end of our stay we booked him into an orphanage and donated a sum of money.

Birth

Then there was the young Ovambo girl that went

into labour just outside the perimeter fence. She was in urgent need of medical assistance. To direct the mother and the girl to the main entrance meant a walk of about 2 km. That wasn't possible. A medical orderly and a protection element crawled through the fence and assisted in the birth of a boy. I was later told that the baby was named after the medic that assisted. I can't remember whether it was a B Coy- or some other medic.

Incidents

One dark night the members on one of the high towers saw a vehicle driving in the domestic area of the town. It collided with an unmanned vehicle. The tower guards followed the incident and the escape route through their night sight binoculars. The culprit proved to be a Koevoet policeman. I accompanied the reaction section to the house indicated. On arrival we were in a short time surrounded by other policemen as I confronted the guilty one. I saw his fist coming for my face and ducked. He connected me halfway on the jaw. In my attempt to evade the punch. I jerked my head backward and an old neck injury let itself known again. The situation became tense and I decided to withdraw the section. There was no sense in having a street brawl with a bunch of intoxicated policemen.

One night the towers reported movement north of the fence. It could have been curfew violators or enemy. We could not tell. I followed the golden midway. Instead of 81 mm bombs I instructed the firing of 81 mm illumination rounds. The suspicious movement stopped. No harm done, or was there? The illumination canister drop back to earth after releasing the charge with its little parachute. Some of those canisters unfortunately landed on the fibreglass verandas of some residences and caused quite a stir.

Brig Joubert and the handgranade fruit decoration.

To liven up the HQ I instructed my signaller to do something about the dull interior. I was thinking of maps or maybe a few nice landscape photos from a magazine. But he was quite creative. We never experienced a shortage of fresh fruit. So he decided to make a nice table decoration with fruit and ammunition. It looked quite weird with banana's, oranges

and hand grenades. On the only visit that Brig Joubert paid to Makalani, he just looked at it, shook his head and left.

Exotic Breakfast

Once the officers were surprised with a very early Champagne breakfast. AO2 Kemp prepared and organised everything in secret. On H Hour he woke all the officers on a "just come as you are" immediately. We were treated on an exotic menu: Skilpadskilfers (Post Toasties), Kerrie Poepolvrug (gekookte eiers), Skrapnel Wilde Vark (bacon strips), Vambo P... (Borerwors) etc. And of course, the Champagne. We were quite jolly by 05:00. With AO2 Kemp around, there was never a dull moment.

Back to Omuthiya

As the year draw to an end, so did our stay at Makalani. We had to evacuate the tents for the new group. There was one day overlap. So the entire B Coy slept sardine style in the mess hall. The next morning we departed to Omuthiya.

Etosha Game Reserve.



As we waited for the final flight back to Waterloof the leader-group paid a visit to the Etosha Game Reserve. We spend the day at Namutoni.

The clearing out of 61 Mech was quick and easy since we have handed all our Ratel equipment and stores in prior to our tour to Oshakati.

Transit Camp

Our last stop was one night in the Grootfontein Transit Camp. True to its reputation, it was filthy, badly organised and unpleasant.

We gladly departed to the AFB Grootfontein the next morning. We were picked up by Elwierda buses back to 4 SAI Bn Middelburg where we handed back our rifles and rucksacks and departed for home.



Crossword Puzzle

by Brig-Genl Tony Savides (Ret)

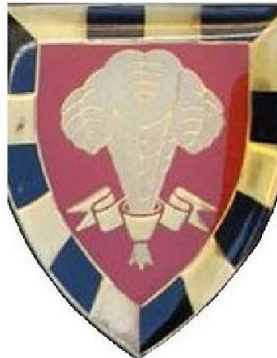
Across

- 1 Miracle workers with dirty hands?
- 7 Kenyan soldier in Angola in 1983/84?
- 8 Need a tow? Pick it up and off you go!
- 9 Ratel's 'grandfather' in its lineage, but no MPV this!
- 10 Compartmented action in 1987? There's an Afrikaans term for it!
- 13 Two flowers in bloom in Angola in 1981
- 15 First Ratel tank killer
- 18 Without it 61 Mech could not be victorious - or so they say
- 19 Dismount or weekend uniform
- 20 Ultimate punishment tool? Flipit!
- 21 62 Mech's home base
- 22 User father of the Ratel, an NCO? Surely not!
- 24 Vulcan's web belt?
- 27 Punishment for mech manne
- 28 River Styx for 47 Bde?

Down

- 2 Engine configuration
- 3 61Mech's home base
- 4 Life savers when you need them.
- 5 That infernal triple-switch!
- 6 For coming and for going - or is it for going and for coming home?
- 10 Santa's first major trip into Angola?
- 11 Keeps everything operational, moving and serviceable - and fed!
- 12 Ratel's 'father' in its lineage. Not quite what was wanted.
- 14 Magician on Ratel's last operations in the Border War?
- 16 Ratel's grandfather's home and its engine
- 17 Each as tough as its namesake
- 23 Stofstrepie's surname
- 25 63 Mech's home base
- 26 Hosepipe in the tyre, but better than we did it as kids?

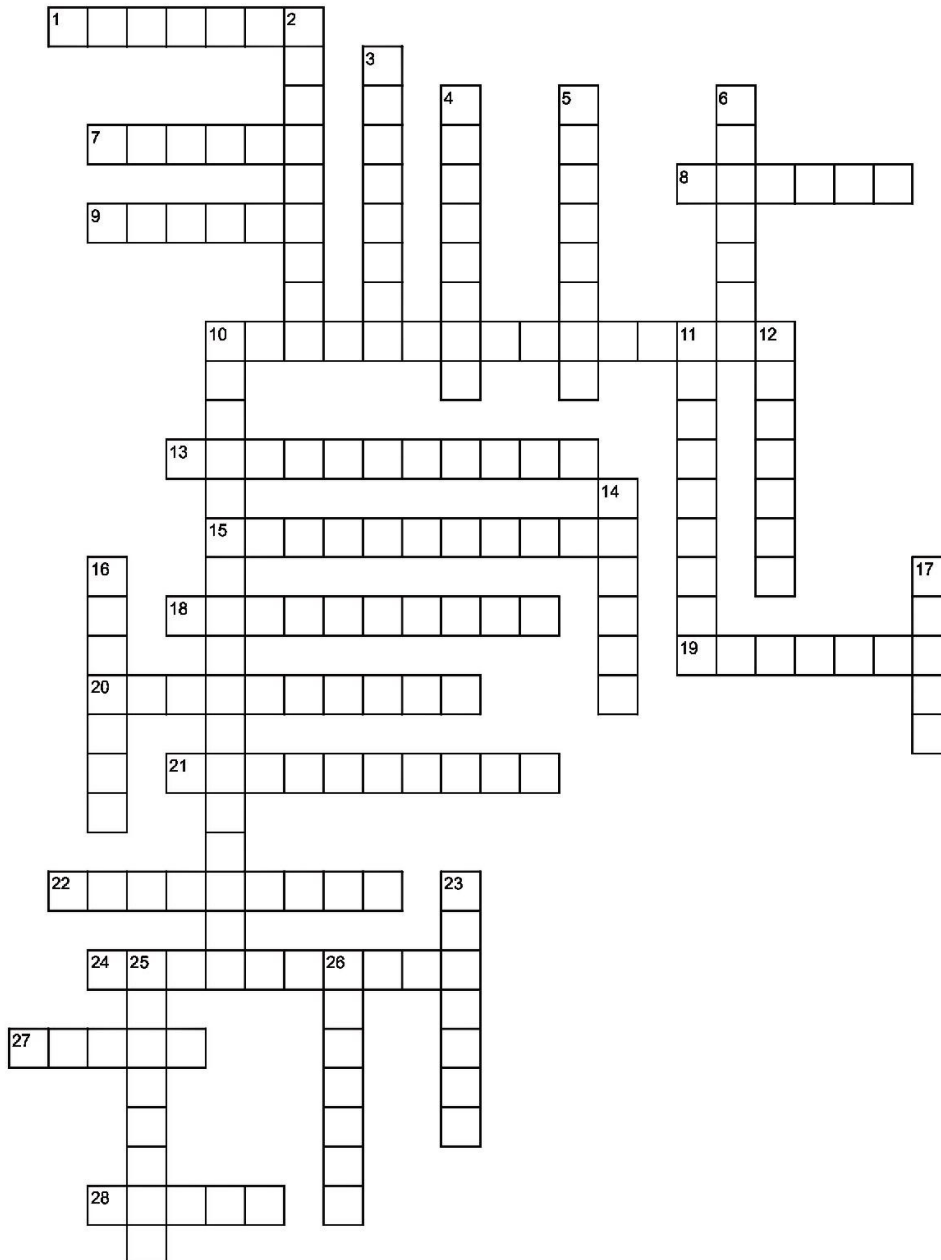
Answers on page 106





RATEL OPERATIONAL

Some clues require two-word (or more) answers but these must be written as one and numeric answers need to be written out..



Die Rol Van 1 Sai Bn In Die Grensoorlog

(André Kruger en Ep Van Lill saam met Tony Savides)

Daar word telkens in kommentaar en artikels oor die Grensoorlog na lede en/of elemente van 1 SAI verwys – ongelukkig meestal waar gesneuweldes of gewondes as lede van (bv) “61 Meg/1 SAI” aangedui word – en selde as “1 SAI” nie. Ook ontstaan die vraag soms: “Benewens personeel afgedeel na 61 Meg, het 1 SAI Bn ook grensdiens verrig?”

Die antwoord is iets soos “ja, maar”!



Agtergrond

1 SA Infanteriebataljon (1 SAI) het in laat 1975 met voorlopige gemeganiseerde infanterie opleiding begin en eers vanaf 1976 in alle erns, toe hulle genoeg Ratels ontvang het en heelwat staflede reeds meg opleiding by die Infanterieskool ondergaan het. Tot einde 1978 het elemente van 1 SAI nog, soos ander voltijdse (NDP) eenhede wel (hulle meg opleiding ten spyte) grensdiens verrig. 1 SAI was, inderdaad, soos ander infanterie eenhede reeds van die begin van die

bosoorlog, dws na oornam by die SAP in die Kaprivi en Owanboland, betrokke.

Dit was gewoonlik as sub-eenhede wat as “mot inf” of “TEIN Inf” in die Operasionele Gebied ontplooi is waar hulle onder plaaslike bevel gekom het en gewone infanterie take onderneem het. André Kruger vertel dat ‘n 1 SAI “Mot” kompanie deur Kmdt Koekemoer van die Inspekteur-generaal se span die hoogste punte in 1978 verdien het en is hy van mening dat dit die meg opleiding was, veral die nadruk op drils, wat die deurslag gegee het.



Die situasie het in 1978 ‘n nuwe wending geneem toe so ‘n ontplooi kompanie onder Maj Ep Van Lill teruggeroep is na die RSA om hulle Ratels te kom haal en deel te vorm van Veggroep Juliet. Van toe af het 1 SAI se rol drasties verander en sou die eenheid en sy sub-eenhede nooit weer as mot inf daar ontplooi word nie.

Vanaf 1979/80 het 1 SAI tog ‘n beduidende- en drieledige rol in die grensoorlog gespeel:

1. Voedingseenheid van opgeleide meg inf elemente



vir 61 Meg Bn Gp (en later vir 4 SAI/62 Meg en 8 SAI/63 Meg).

2. Voorsiening van Staandemag (S Mag) personeel en NDP leiergroep na 61 Meg. Sommige staflede sou ook later na 61 Meg, 4 SAI en 8 SAI verplaas word.



3. Ontwikkeling en aanpassing van meg inf doktrine- en gevegshantering om tred te hou met verwikkelinge in en vereistes van die bosoorlog.

Voedingseenheid

Soos met ander voedingseenhede (1 SDB, 2 SDB, Genieskool, ens) het personeel wat na 61 Meg (of elders) afgedeel is, steeds op 1 SAI (as “tuiseenheid”) se sterkte gebly en het die eenheid elemente van administratiewe beheer oor hulle behou. Bv., alle persoonlike uitrusting wat nie saam grens toe is nie, is by die eenheid gebêre en moes akkommodasie beskikbaar gehou word vir die terugkeer en wissel van sub-eenhede. Wat meg inf personeel aanbetref, was 61 Meg se troepe dus deurgaans ook 1 SAI se troepe gewees – tot daar later NDP lede voltyds aan 61 Meg toegeken is. In die geval van ongevallen, het die eenheid ook verskeie verantwoordelikhede behou, soos hosi-

taal-administrasie, militêre begrafnisse, oppak en oorhandiging van persoonlike items aan naasbestaendes, uitpasseer- en uitklaar van innames, ens.

Vanaf 1979 moes 1 SAI twee volledige meg inf kompanies, insluitend S Mag en NDP leiergroepe deurgaans aan 61 Meg beskikbaar stel, met oorvleueling van innames waar toepaslik. Daarby, moes die eenheid ook alle ander meg inf elemente verskaf soos mortier, tenkafweer, stormpionierss, verkenners, infanterie-medics, admin- en logistieke personeel, ens. Dit het, onder andere, daartoe gelei dat 1 SAI vanaf 1980, ten alle tye vier NDP innames op sterkte moes hê (Januarie- en Julie-innames wat met voriges oorvleuel het). Vir groter operasies soos Protea het 1 SAI ook addisionele personeel en ‘n meg kompanie, en ook verskeie Ratels beskikbaarstel.

Daarbenewens het 1 SAI verantwoordelik gebly vir die voeding van die meg inf B Mag eenhede, insluitende leiergroepe, na afloop van hulle aanvanklike dienspligtydperk.

Staandemag en NDP Leiergroepe

61 Meg het aanvanklik slegs ‘n kern van S Mag- en NDP personeel gehad, veral op HK vlak en vir admin, log, sein, tegnies en ander dissiplines. Meg kompanies wat om die beurt by 61 Meg gedien het, is vanaf 1 SAI afgedeel en het meestal ook dieselfde S Mag leiers ingesluit wat verantwoordelik was vir die spesifieke sub-eenhede se opleiding tot net voor ontplooiing. Kompanies het dus personeel-gewys byna volledig by 61 Meg aangekom en het sg “marrying-up”



hoofsaaklik te doen gehad met 61 Meg se roetine, -SOPs, -admin en log, edm., eerder as tussen nuwe troepe en hulle leiers. Dieselfde het in baie opsigte vir pantser, artillerie, genie, en vele ander toegevoegde elemente gegeld, totdat sulke elemente later voltyds aan



61 Meg afgedeel is.

Vele S Mag lede van 1 SAI het meer as een diensbeurt by 61 Meg deurgebring en kon hulle enige gapings tussen dit wat by 1 SAI as doktrine en gevegshantering gedoseer is en dit wat by 61 Meg uitgevoer is, vernou of uitgeskakel word. Van 1 SAI se kompanies het ook meer as een tydperk by 61 Meg gedien, aanvanklik as nuwelinge en daarna as gesoute ou manne.



Ontplooiing van opgeleide meg infanteriste na 61 Meg en 4 SAI was vir 1 SAI beide 'n doelwit en 'n tussen-doelwit. Uit die aard van die heersende oorlog was dit noodsaaklik dat sub-eenhede wat operasioneel ontplooi word op die hoogste standaard was om inskakeling by die operasionele eenhede te verseker en te vergemaklik. Dit was dus die primêre- en korttermyn doelwit, maar uiteindelik sou die NDP personeel aan B Mag meg eenhede toegeken word waar hulle deel uitgemaak het van die SA Leër se konvensionele mag. Finale afronding as konvensionele meg infanteriste sou later die verantwoordelikheid wees van die B Mag en van die Leërgevegsskool.

Tydens die eerste Meg Inf Simposium in 1980 is verhoë gerig dat opgeleide meg kompanies as geheel aan B Mag meg eenhede toegeken moet word, dws insluitend die betrokke NDP leierelemente, en volledige pelotons, seksies, ens. Dit sou veral verdere ontplooiing maar ook verder opleiding en aanwending aansienlik vergemaklik, hoewel daar meer druk op die opleiding van die meer senior elemente van sulke eenhede geplaas sou word – andersins sou daar geharde kompanieledes wees, meestal met redelike operasionele en selfs gevegsondervinding. Daarteenoor sou van die senior personeel minder (of selfs glad nie) “meg georiënteerd” wees nie. Ongelukkig en weens verskeie faktore het dit geheel-plasing nooit plaasgevind nie en het die troepe wel by B Mag meg eenhede uitgekom terwyl baie van die leiergroep by Universiteitsregimente ingedeel is.

Meg Doktrine en Gevegshantering

Hoewel die Infanterieskool deurgaans steeds die Alma Mater van alle infanterie gebly het, het 1 SAI dié rol vir meg infanterie oorgeneem – veral m.b.t. die Grensoorlog. Die oënskynlike gaping tussen die SA Leër se konvensionele- en “bosoorlog” doktrine vir gemeganiseerde magte het geleidelik vernou, deels weens die lesse uit verskeie oorgrens meg operasies soos Protea, Daisy, Askari ens., en die ontplooiing van B Mag elemente tydens operasies soos Dolfyn en Askari. Die sg “konvensionele fase” van die Bosoorlog in 1987/88 het dalk die deurslag gegee waar beide die staande eenhede (61 Meg, 4 SAI, ens.) en verskeie B Mag eenhede (of elemente daarvan) aan die operasies en aan die gevegte deelgeneem het.

Die vernouing is ook aansienlik aangehelp deur die verplasing van gesoute S Mag meg infanteriste aan die SA Leërskollege en die Leërgevegsskool waar hulle die konvensionele doktrine al hoe meer in die rigting van die “Afrika Bosoorlog”, en weg van suiwer konvensioneel, gestuur het.

Die oor- en weer verskuiwing van 1 SAI personeel na 61 Meg en terug, en hulle deelname aan 61 Meg oefeninge en veral aan operasies, het 'n kruisbestuiwing teweeggebring. Opleiding by 1 SAI, veral in die paar maande voor ontplooiing, het al hoe meer 61 Meg se SOPs en gebruike ingesluit en kon opleiding en veld-oefening al hoe meer realisties wees – gebaseer op spesifieke operasies en die lesse daaruit geleer. (Ep Van Lill, het egter op 'n dag uitgewys dat die “Lesse Geleer” handboekie wat gereeld uit die Ops Gebied versprei is, eerder as “Foute Gemaak” bekend moes wees – want verskeie “lesse” is in opvolg-uitgawes ingesluit, wat aangedui het dat dié betrokke lesse nooit geleer is nie en is sommige foute bloot maand na maand herhaal.)



Die rol en taak van 1 SAI, en veral die Meg Leier Vleuel was juis om sulke foute uit te skakel en het die “meg foute” al hoe meer uit die “Lesse Geleer” boekie verdwyn. Meg Inf sou nooit weer dieselfde wees nie!

Meg Doktrine kring uit

Waar die aanvanklike meg inf doktrine tot ‘n groot mate op die gevegshantering van die SA Pantserkorps en van Mot Inf geskoei is, het 1 SAI, in samewerking met die Pantserkool en 1 SDB later die spul geword waarom meg doktrine oor die algemeen gedraai het. Soos Andre Kruger dit stel “Although mech inf leaned heavily on armour drills, etc, we actually revitalised the mobile operations approach in totality. The birth and development of echelons at combat team and combat group level was refined and was one of the success factors in operations. The role of the WO as a combat leader was a massive plus for our NCOs.” Hy voeg by “Rotation of staff between 1SAI, 4SAI and 61 Mech Bn managed to create a solid “All Arms”, mobile capability in the SA Army. The support of the Armour, Artillery and Support Services fraternity requires special mention.”

Dele van die meg doktrine is ook deur “nie meg” eenhede oorgeneem en aangepas, soos 101 Bn, 201 Bn, 32 Bn, ens., waar van die drils en ook elemente van die echelonstelsel waar toepaslik deel van hulle SOPs geword het. Ervare Smag meg lede het ook later leiersposisies by ander eenhede gevul waar die kruisbestuiwing tussen meg en mot uitgekling het. Die Meg Pl handboek en veral die Aide Memoire het ook groot byval gevind en is vrylik versprei.

Benewens S Mag lede wat by 1 SAI ingedeel is, het verskeie ander lede ook Meg oriëntasie kursusse by 1 SAI en 61 Meg bygewoon en is die waarde van ‘n “Meg inslag” by hulle ingeboesem. Die MLV het ook ‘n drie-weke kursus vir meg pelotonleiers aangebied wat onder jong S Mag offisiere baie gewild geword het.



Buitelandse studente op SAW- en later SANW kursusse is ook aan ons meg doktrine blootgestel. Maj Fred Rindel en AO2 Jakes Jacobs (SAPK), Maj Andre Kruger en Kapt Jan Ehlert (SAIK) het ook die taak gehad om in 1980 ‘n meg eenheid (Ratel 90, Ratel 20, en Eland 20) uit bestaande elemente van die Royal Moroccan Army te omskep en op te lei.

Die Burgermag Meg Eenhede

Die opleiding en aanwending van die B Mag meg eenhede word nie verder hier aangespreek nie behalwe om te bevestig dat verskeie van die gesoute S Mag meg infanteriste by die Konvensionele formasies ingedeel is, en selfs oor van die brigades bevel gevoer het. Soos reeds gemeld, het hulle ook ‘n groot rol in die opleiding en magsgereedheid van B Mag meg personeel en -eenhede by die SA Leërkollege en Leërgevegsskool gespeel.

Hieroor in ‘n latere uitgawe van hierdie tydskrif.

Slot

1 SAI se rol in die Grensoorlog is duidelik, maar die eenheid se belangrikste impak op die Grensoorlog is dalk (soos deur Ep uitgewys): “... dat 1SAI die semi konvensionele fase begin het ...” of te wel die oorgrens meg operasies soos Sceptic, Protea en Daisy, deur tot Askari, Moduler, Hooper, Packer, ens. Dit was Veggp Juliet wat in 1978 die eerste keer Angola as meg mag binnegedring het, eerstens as ‘n ad hoc groepering in die opvolg na die ontvoering van Spr Johann Van Der Mescht en, later as volwaardige veggroep tydens die grondfase van Operasie Reindeer. 1 Veggp Juliet se kern in beide operasies was die bevelsgroep en meg kompanies van 1 SAI met toegevoegde elemente soos pantserkarre, artillerie, lug, ens. Die sukses van hierdie grondfase (tegniese- en ander probleme ten spyte) het die beginsel van sulke meg veggroepe bevestig, en is 61 Meg vroeg in 1979 gestig.

Nota

Die optredes van die SAW elemente tydens Op Savannah in 1975 word, vir hierdie doeleindes, nie as “meg mag operasies” beskou nie.



Cuban and Russian advisors, became holed up in underground defensive positions at Cuito Cuanavale

Reflections of a Cold War Intelligence Operator: Putin, Gorbachev and the Collapse of the USSR

Dr Anthony Turton 2023

I was an operator in the 1980's and 1990's in what was then known as the Chief Directorate Covert Operations (CDCO), a specialised unit within the National Intelligence Service (NIS) that had been established as a high impact resource to be deployed in a focussed manner. In the late 1980's a number of strategic events were playing out in the Southern African region, all of which created a risk landscape of extreme uncertainty. Examples of this are many, so I will mention but a few, merely to set the scene.

In 1987-1988, during the big conventional battles along the Lomba River, known today as Operations Modular, Hooper, Packer, Excite and others, the Cold War ended abruptly. The SADF forces succeeded in preventing FAPLA from meeting their mission objective of capturing Jamba and neutralising UNITA. The highly aggressive Cuban 50th Brigade was unable to go onto the offensive into Namibia, its logistics line proving vulnerable to sabotage by SADF Special Forces such as Operation Drostdy. FAPLA, along with their Cuban and Russian advisors, became holed up in underground defensive positions at Cuito Cuanavale, unable to advance on Jamba, and almost overnight a window of opportunity opened for South Africa.

Today we live in a bewildering world. Governments are losing legitimacy, populism and nationalism are both on the ascendency, as are anti-globalist sentiments. The democracies of the so-called free world are showing signs of distress, as the power of social media has given each a voice. The world has recently faced the threat of global economic meltdown, a pandemic that rewrote the rules of free trade, and the Russo-Ukrainian War that has sent energy markets into shock and exposed the global vulnerability of food supply chains. In South Africa, we face all of the

above, but with the added problems of a failing state, characterised by the collapse of both the energy grid and water supply systems. Our economy is in severe distress, with unemployment at all time highs, a net outflow of private capital and highly skilled individuals, a diminishing tax base and an increasingly embattled and illegitimate government.

In December 1979, in distant Afghanistan, Leonid Brezhnev deployed the Soviet 40th Army, in response to the Saur Revolution. The mission, defined by the Brezhnev Doctrine, was to destroy the Mujahideen, and install a pro-Soviet government in Kabul. The Russians were in command, and chose to fight as they typically do, by strictly following doctrine. That doctrine meant establishing air superiority and then enabling ground-based forces to penetrate defined target areas and capture designated towns and cities. The problem that they failed to appreciate, was that Afghan society is feudal, with power based on tribal loyalties, not in capital cities. In 1985, the CIA introduced the Stinger missile systems to the Mujahideen. Before the era of the Stinger, the Mujahideen never won one





The final and complete withdrawal of Soviet combatant forces from Afghanistan began on 15 May 1988 and ended on 15 February 1989

set piece battle against the USSR forces. After Stinger, then never lost one. Stinger challenged the conventional wisdom of the Soviets, and they were simply unable to respond. They eventually did the only thing they could do – retreat while claiming some form of mission success. We know that was a farce, because the USSR was defeated in Afghanistan, exactly as the Americans were defeated in Vietnam. Neither admit defeat, but the reality is different.

The significance of the defeat of the USSR in Afghanistan must be understood in the context of the leadership change in 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. He was faced with three significant crises, that had major ramifications for the world in general, but South Africa in particular.

- The introduction of Stinger systems to Afghanistan made the protracted war technically unwinnable, so a face-saving response was required.
- The arms race, characterised by the Cold War, had completely drained the Soviet Union of all resources, with a legacy of radioactive pollution a growing and existential threat that persists today.
- The fiscus was under persistent pressure to bail out State Owned Entities (SOE's), which had become so cumbersome and inefficient over decades of central planning, to the point where it was simply unable to cope any more.

Gorbachev decided to adopt a radical new approach, in which he deescalated the tensions, and reached out to the West. We all remember the famous Reagan speech in which he made the plea, "Mister Gorbachev, tear down this wall".

It was against this strategic background that we, in South Africa, faced a historic opportunity. With the USSR busy imploding, the war in Angola changed dramatically, as the Cubans could no longer be constrained. Most people think of the Cubans as a proxy force for the USSR, but this is very far from the truth. On the contrary, the Cubans – by which I mean Fidel Castro – were deeply suspicious of the Russians. They felt betrayed by Khrushchev during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and they were equally angered by the Americans after the Bay of Pigs incident. The Cubans were active in Angola at the precise time when Russian power started to decline. In Angola, it was the Russians who were moderates, restraining the Cubans for fear of escalating the Cold War into a hot conflict, reflecting the Kissinger Doctrine designed to prevent escalation in a world of thermonuclear weapons.

But after 1985, Russian power was in decline, as was its capacity to restrain Cuba. This is an important element to understand, because it became extremely relevant in the next few years. In June 1987, at the very time that the USSR forces were withdrawing from Afghanistan, Gorbachev addressed the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Central to this was the need to reform the SOE's, which triggered the Soviet Joint Venture Law and the Law on State Enterprises. These two laws had a profound impact, because they invited western corporations into the USSR, but they also enabled the Oligarchs to emerge when they captured the core assets of the SOE's, effectively nationalising the liability while privatising the high value core. Both of these became vital in the decades to come. Unbeknownst to him at the time, Gorbachev had initiated a series of reforms over which he no longer exerted control. Along with their Cuban and Russian advisors, became holed up in underground defensive positions at Cuito Cuanavale, unable to advance on Jamba, and almost overnight a window of opportunity opened for South Africa.

This window of opportunity was defined by the following:

- Penetration of the command-and-control line between Havana and Menongue revealed the fact that Cuba wanted a face-saving way to leave Angola. Here, the analogue is the Russian withdrawal from Afghanistan, where defeat was turned into victory by means of sophisticated propaganda.
- With the real prospect of Cubans leaving Angola, South Africa was prepared to withdraw as well.



The final and complete withdrawal of Soviet combatant forces from Afghanistan began on 15 May 1988 and ended on 15 February 1989

- More importantly SA was prepared to implement UN Resolution 435 and grant Namibia its independence.
- With the USSR no longer a factor, this provided a potential opportunity that was unlikely to repeat itself again.

Within this milieu, NIS had been operating.

The CDCO, of which I was then a part, was directly involved in many of the successful special operations being run in the background. These can be thought of as enablers for the big event yet to come – a negotiated ending of the Armed Struggle.

Time and space precludes me from elaborating on details of what was happening inside SA in 1989, but I can assure you that it was a lot. Within NIS an innocuous organ had been created. It was named the Special Work Group (SWG), and I found myself seconded to it, ostensibly representing the operational interests of the CDCO. Each sub-unit had a representative on the SWG, and I was the liaison officer for K32. This was unusual, because the norm at that time was strict compartmentation of all offensive operational entities, with a rigid application of the need-to-know principle. For the first time I began learning of other structures like K21, K22 and K31. I had previously been deployed in K43, but that is another matter for a different conversation.

The SWG consisted of a handful of operational members of the CDCO, tasked collectively with developing the intelligence foundation for a big event that the public was yet unaware of – the negotiated

conclusion of the Armed Struggle and the creation of a new constitution through a process that would come to be known as the Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA). That handful of operators were the initial surveillance spearhead that would eventually give South Africa a new constitution. But I am getting ahead of myself, because there were many stumbling blocks in the way as a new landscape of risk opened up.

Navigating that uncharted landscape of risk was the *raison d'être* for the CDCO. It was the very reason that the unit had been established in the first place. Space and time precludes me from explaining how this was done, save to say that we made extensive use of highly trained operators, often deployed in small teams, capable of operating with minimal assistance in a foreign hostile environment, independent of any embassy support. In fact, it was the anticipation of the total loss of embassy representation that played a core role in the creation of the CDCO in the first place. Those specialists were tasked with answering specific questions, defined in technical terms as OEI's (Outstanding Elements of Information).

The audience needs to understand that when entering a new risk landscape, this is done with great consideration to the many ramifications of the operation. The risk-reward ratio is carefully weighed up before a suitably qualified operator is inserted into theatre, and plans are put in place to mitigate all the known risks. These are defined through a process known as target analysis, which involves the definition of the Essential Elements of Information (EEI) needed to solve a core strategic problem. In essence, the EEI's were a checklist of what we needed to know to derive a robust answer to a question of national strategic importance, in an environment characterised by high risk and conflicting information coming from sources of varying reliability. It was the operators task to explore the risk landscape, but to focus specifically on answering the questions defined by what it is that we need to know but don't yet know – the OEI's noted above. When you know what it is that you don't yet know, you are suddenly in a very strong position, ready to go onto the offensive with precision targeting.

In mid-1989 the big strategic question was whether we could realistically negotiate a peaceful end to the Armed Struggle? This was highly sensitive, with a strict need to know restriction placed on all personnel involved. In the whole of NIS, maybe 20 people knew

about this, that's how sensitive it was. One of the big OEI's was centred on the unknown factor of Russia. Stated differently, we needed to verify whether Russia still had the capacity to project power outside of its borders, in the face of the disintegration of the USSR. In short, as the USSR was fraying around the edges, would Russia send tanks to Berlin or Bucharest, as they had done in Prague in 1968? Would Russia interfere with CODESA? Did they have the capacity to derail or influence the process?



The Berlin Wall was opened 9 November 1989

It was against this background that I was deployed in 1989. Applying strict operational rules for personal and national security, the deep penetration operation made use of the third country principle. This means that my country of temporary residence, was not the country of operational interest. In fact, all efforts were made to avoid detection by the Service in the host country, for our actions were not against their own national security interest. I cannot say too much about the operational details underpinning the deployment, but can elaborate on the following facts of relevance to the discussion today.

I found myself at what had been the point of Cold War contestation for virtually my entire life – the Berlin Wall – during the latter part of 1989. It was there that I confronted the stark difference between reality and illusion. The illusion had been deftly portrayed that the USSR was so strong, that the Iron Curtain was impregnable. This illusion was a powerful one, underpinned by sophisticated propaganda showing the fate of those who had tried to escape to the West. The first time that I saw The Wall was during seething protests. Arguably the most imposing part was the Brandenburg Gate, standing like a stark reminder of the bitter combat in 1945 that left the city under rubble from

door-to-door street fighting, mostly by the Red Army, to be later divided into different sectors controlled by the Allied forces. It stood there in 1989 as a splendid reminder of the resilience of German architecture in the face of the sheer destruction of Soviet firepower. I found myself reflecting on the gravid presence of the many souls departed at that one place, now standing like a stark monument dividing the East and the West. When I first saw the old Kaiser Wilhelm Church spire at Kurfürstendamm, bombed out in the war, but now a monument, I could not help but be deeply moved.

This was the frontline of the Cold War. This was where spies had been swapped for decades and this was where the myth of Soviet might was tested in the most public way on 9 November 1989 when it was announced that all border checkpoints between East Germany and West Germany would be opened. Without one shot being fired, fuelled by miscommunication, the myth was debunked as the reality of Soviet power became apparent for all the world to see. I recall the sense of utter amazement as I watched ordinary people moving over what until that moment had been the hardest of all borders in my known world. I was literally gobsmacked as I learned of one of the border guards, Harald Jäger, in command of the Bornholmer Strasse checkpoint, trying to contact his superiors for orders, but to no avail. It later became apparent that he knew his force was outnumbered, and he was reluctant to become the man who ordered the use of lethal force against unarmed civilians, so he ordered his staff to open the boom and allow people to pass without checking their papers. He later became a controversial figure because some accused him of being a coward, for ignoring the eventual garbled orders to allow GDR citizens out, but not back in again. He went down in history as the man who let people move freely, rather than open fire against them.

Over that weekend around two million people crossed the border from the GDR to West Germany, shattering the myth of Soviet invincibility forever. In one instant, 16 million people were liberated from the persistent fear of the STASI, the East German Secret Police, and a year later German unification had irreversibly altered the entire gain of the Cold War. But, deep within the KGB office in Dresden was a career officer named Vladimir Putin, dealing with the fallout from the collapse of the USSR. Taking a cue from Romania, where an angry mob had successfully stormed a regional headquarters of the Securitate, the local equivalent of the STASI, overthrowing the force and taking

control for the first time in their lives. The date was 5 December 1989, and an attempt was made to storm the STASI office in Dresden. In close proximity was the KGB office, and confronting the angry crowd was Vladimir Putin. He warned the leaders not to storm the building, saying that if they did, they would be shot. The crowd hesitated, and Putin gained control momentarily. Putin then did what all Russians do, by going up the chain of command to ask for instructions. Remembering the Securitate incident where officers had been killed by an angry mob, Putin needed orders. He phoned KGB headquarters in Moscow, but nobody answered. Undeterred, Putin then phoned the commander of the Red Army tank unit calling for protection should the crowd return. This is precisely what we were looking for – evidence of the Russian capacity to respond in the face of a disintegration of the satellite states comprising the USSR. Would the tanks roll in as before?

Putin received a curt response that they (the tank unit) could do nothing without orders, and “Moscow is silent”. With those three words, our OEI was answered. Russia had lost the capacity to project power outside of its own territory. For us this was a moment of triumph, even as we did not yet understand the details of it, learning much of these later. All that we knew was that the citizens had revolted, and both the STASI and Securitate had been overrun, but the KGB office was still intact but probably no longer functional. More importantly, Gorbachev had not authorised the deployment of tanks, and of even greater significance, he met with Chancellor Helmut Kohl in December 1989 as the unification of Germany was cemented, thus ending the bitter division of the Cold War.

Putin was later to describe the breakup of the USSR as the biggest tragedy of the 20th Century. He returned to Moscow, even as Gorbachev was being ousted by a military coup that brought in Boris Yeltsin, the colourful politician who joined the popular uprising when the tanks were shelling the Duma. It was this pattern that characterised the collapse of the USSR, most notably the intervention of the security forces on the side of the revolting masses, against their former master’s in government.

This is highly relevant today in contemporary South Africa, as we face a growing likelihood of our own internal revolt.

I returned home in about March 1990, emaciated, consumed by the rigors of operational deployment in a foreign hostile environment, but with the personal observation that there was no tangible evidence that Russia still had the capacity to project force outside of its own borders. The USSR had disintegrated, and the most secure hard border in the then known world had succumbed, not to tanks and artillery, but rather to confused guards unwilling to give the order to use lethal force in the absence of clear instruction from above. The myth of Russian invincibility had been laid bare, and the young KGB officer named Vladimir Putin was busy setting himself up to be named by Yeltsin as his heir apparent and the future legitimate leader of an isolated and demoralised Russia that was being overwhelmed by Western corporations and captured by billionaire Oligarchs. But, more importantly, we could proceed with CODESA, safe in the knowledge that external interference from Russia would be feeble if not unlikely.

I distinctly recall my return journey, in an SAA Jumbo Jet, in which I felt safe for the first time after months of lonely operational deployment. What made my return home so poignant for me, besides the sheer joy of being safe once again, was the fact that sharing my flight was a large contingent of ANC/SACP exiles coming home. I recall the bizarre disconnect of my last image of what was then Jan Smuts Airport, and my last place of safety for many months, but under the orange, white and blue of the SA flag; when viewed against the new reality of seeing the red flag of the SACP flying at what was later renamed as Oliver Tambo International Airport. I slipped through the customs with as little fuss as possible, eager only to see my family once again and start to decompress.

Time and space don’t allow me to go into any more detail of that deployment. I will return to the present by sharing some insights that I gained as an intelligence officer who found himself deployed into what was literally the last moment of the Cold War. This was the final demise of the USSR that we were aware of in NIS, even as the big battles raged in Angola in 1987 and 1988.

The first insight that I wish to share is the absolute myth of Russian invincibility. In my professional life I had the privilege of meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in person. I can even say that I got to know him, his wife Raiza and red haired granddaughter whose name I cannot recall, as real human beings. I even got to

know an advisor of his, with whom we shared many warm moments. I never got to meet Vladimir Putin in person, but we were both intelligence officers of similar rank deployed into the epicentre of the eventual collapse of the USSR. We both experienced the tumultuous events underpinning the demise of Nicolae Ceaușescu and Eric Honecker, both strongmen of Soviet Socialist Republics. In this process I have come to realize, exactly as was reported to NIS at the time, that Russia was, and still is, a mythical force. It had lost the capacity to project authority into the world in a way that is consistent with the international rules based system of government enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and underpinning the many legal instruments relating to sovereignty and the rule of force, way back in the 1980s. It has only sustained that myth through the sophisticated use of propaganda, and what is best described as asymmetrical warfare in the digital age.

Don't let bluff and bluster fool you. Don't become confused about the physical size of Russia, as the largest single country on the planet, covering eleven time zones, with real power. Many large countries are in fact weak powers. It's the sheer size of the surface area that makes it impossible for a central government to project authority over the entire geographic area that we call the sovereign state. In Africa we have excellent examples of very large countries, also being the weakest in terms of projecting authority outwards. Think of the Congo, Sudan and Central African Republic, all massive yet weak militarily and economically. Russia is no different, with an economy the size of Texas or Spain.

Think about what this means in terms of capacity to sustain a protracted war. Hubris is not the same as empirical reality.

The second insight is related to the capacity of any state to convert new ideas into cutting edge military technology, and then develop a supply chain capable of industrialising those new weapons systems. Yes, it is true that Russia has hypersonic missiles. It is also possibly true that NATO forces might not have the capacity to intercept such weapon platforms. Note that I say possibly because we don't know this as fact. What we do know is that the Ukrainian Armed Forces have not succumbed to a brutal Russian onslaught. More importantly we also know that the capacity to get missile launch platforms close enough to make a difference – for the range of all missiles is defined by the

fuel that can be carried, and hypersonic missiles use masses of propellant – is limited simply by virtue of the depleted capacity of the navy and air force. Right now Russia is unable to get its navy close enough to Ukraine to make a difference, and even as we speak it is trying to get a fleet close enough to the continental USA to pose a legitimate threat. If it has failed in Ukraine, why would it succeed in America?

Let us assume, for arguments sake, that Russian hypersonic missiles are really a game changer. Then let us compare this with Nazi Germany, a truly industrial nation, in constant search for the so-called wunder waffen (wonder weapon) that would alter the outcome of the Second World War. Germany has always been way more technologically advanced than Russia has ever been, and even it was unable to find that single game-changing weapon that made a difference to the outcome of the war. I ask a logical question about how an economy, the size of Texas or Spain, riddled with corruption, and vulnerable to sanctions aimed at critical components like semiconductors and other items needed to control hypersonic missiles, will be capable of converting new ideas into precision weapons of war in numbers big enough to make a difference?

Simple logic tells me that this is impossible, when that same army is unable to sustain a logistics line capable of capturing Kyiv.

The third insight is related to the core weakness of any authoritarian society where people are afraid to tell the leader what he doesn't want to hear. We have seen this pattern repeat itself time and again. Effective military leaders always surround themselves with experts capable of giving them advice, typically from dissenting views. Authoritarian leaders are intolerant of dissent, and so they are seldom given information that differs from the opinion they already hold about a given topic. Too many people are falling out of high buildings in Russia, or succumbing to poison, to create a safe enough space for a senior officer to dissent by pointing out a critical flaw in the plan of the autocrat. Saddam, Hitler, and Putin were all unwilling to hear dissenting views, and so their plans remained inflexible, and ultimately failed.

The fourth insight is related to the depth of resentment that the citizens of the former USSR states have towards Russia. Remember that the tanks were inserted into Prague precisely to suppress an uprising in 1968. The feelings that ordinary citizens have towards

Russia is not one of warmth. On the contrary, I would go so far as to say that Russia is feared by the citizens of the former USSR, even to the point of being hated. We must not make the mistake of believing that a leader in one of those satellite states represents the best interest of the citizens. To understand this, we must think differently about Russia as a mediaeval society based on strictly enforced feudal hierarchy. Putin has forced order onto an unwilling populace, but in so doing he has empowered what used to be known as the Boyars, now known as the Oligarchs, who are nothing more than feudal warlords. They are gangsters with Armani suits, meting out the most primitive form of justice imaginable, and they are certainly not popular in their own sphere of interest.

Which leads me to my fifth insight. The South African government has made a decision to openly side with Russia, a pariah state. In so doing, we have lost all moral high ground that was occupied from 1994 until the recent past. South Africa has chosen to become a member of that pariah community, and this has consequences. I am firmly of the opinion that targeted economic sanctions are coming from both the USA and the EU, aimed specifically at enablers and elites within the ruling ANC/SACP Alliance. People with business exposure to any of this are now at risk, so all I can say is take heed and develop a circuit breaker to insulate your own financial interest from those of the ruling elite.

Finally, we need to ask whether an embattled Putin will resort to nuclear weapons? I think the answer to that is not a simple one. If Putin was a rational actor, then he would know that any use of nuclear weapons would immediately result in overwhelming retaliation. If I were to make a judgement call, I would say that Putin is not a rational actor, so he might well consider the nuclear option. In this regard we need to take comfort from the billions of Dollars invested into the most sophisticated intelligence operations known to mankind, all targeting this one single issue. By this I mean that the combined intelligence services of NATO, and the rest of the Free World, will have penetrated the Russian chain of command at multiple levels. If NIS could do it to Cuba in the 1980s, then so much more can the CIA, MI6, Mossad, BND, SDECE and litany of other sophisticated Services do the same. A very high probability exists that NATO Governments will know, before the strike is ordered. The analogue here is a famous case that occurred during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when a Russian intelligence

officer known as Colonel Oleg Penkovsky, defected to MI6, and provided the affirmation needed to reduce tensions by closing the gap of uncertainty. Penkovsky was eventually assassinated, for Russia does not tolerate defectors, but the citizens of the Free World owe him a huge debt of gratitude, even if the average person has never heard his name. Today, I am convinced, that many modern generation Penkovsky's are being handled by NATO Services, and from those high value sources' governments will get what they need to know, to protect their citizens.

In conclusion, I am proud of my operational service as an intelligence officer. In NIS, we were part of something way bigger than ourselves as individuals. We made a difference, and we developed deep insights into complex strategic matters that impacted on the daily lives of millions of citizens. We served with integrity, and we asked for no recognition.



Veterane Vaardighede uit die Militêre Handboek

Laer Vlak Bevel - En Beheer Vaardighede (LBBV)

Dit was 'n kursus wat aangebied was vir Junior Leiers (JL) tydens opleiding en ontplooiings tydens die Bosoorlog. Dit was vir die ranggroep Korporaal (Pl Sers and the Pl O/O) en die 2/Lt (Peloton bevelvoerder). Die term "laer vlak" verwys nie na die eenvoud van die kursus nie. Maar verwys eerder na die vlak waarop die peloton se leiergroep hierdie vaardighede moes aanleer. Hoe om met mense te werk. Dit is waarom die JL's die ruggraat van die weermag genoem is. Alle range daarna, d.i. die kompanie- en bataljongroep bevelvoerder. Hulle bestuur organisasies. Die majoor het drie tot vyf pelotons met elk deur sy diensplig leiergroep JL's bestuur. Die Bn Bev weer het sy sub eenhede. Maar die vlak waarop die JL's beweeg het was dit mensekennis wat getel het. Van hierdie kort resepte uit die LBBV is net so van toepassing op die direksievlak van 'n groot maatskappy as in die peloton of seksie.

Teen hierdie agtergrond kan ons aanneem dat die Militêre Veteraan (Mil Vet) op dieselfde tema 'n leier vir sy kinders, vriende van sy kinders, sy kleinkinders... is. Die beginsels is fundamentele waarhede wat 'n mens met sukses in alle vlakke van die lewe kan gebruik. In hierdie artikel plaas ons 11 van die 22 modules. Dit is saamgestel uit die kursusnotas van Maj Stephan Henrico oor die kurrikulum uit die LBBV Handboek gedurende die '80's – tydens die hoogtepunt van die Bosoorlog en die Nasionale Diensplig era.

Die betekenisvolle figuur in die gesin is die vader of oupa figuur. Die gesin is 'n saamgeweefde sosiale groep gebind deur bloedbande en / of sterk emosionele en liefdesbande. Om hierdie harmonie tot almal se voordeel te ontwikkel, verg volgehoue aandag. Die ouers is die rolmodel wat rigting gee aan die kinders se verkenning van die wêreld. Die uitbouing van hierdie vaardigheid bepaal die lewens kwaliteit van die gesin en het 'n invloed op die geslagte daarna. Die kind leer die wêreld ken deur die oë van sy ouers, en word geleidelik meer selfstandig tot volwasseheid.

Die rolmodelle in die gesinslewe bepaal uiteindelik die lewensbalans van die individuele gesinslede.



Ek is Meg Mekkie
'n 61 Meg Veteraan

Hoe Om Samewerking Te Verkry

As ouer of enige ander vorm van die betekenisvolle figuur in die gesinslewe, is jy die leier van die trop. Dit is jou voorreg en roeping om die lede in jou familie te lei tot gebalanseerde individue. Die proses is een van groei. In die begin fases word wenslike gedragspatrone afgedwing. Soos die lede groei op die pad na volwassenheid is die verkryging van vrywillige samewerking toenemend meer belangrik.

*

Stel die behoefte aan samewerking met verwysing na die familie doelwitte.

*

Sê duidelik dat jy hulle hulp nodig het.

*

Dui aan dat samewerking noodsaaklik is.

*

Dui die persoonlike voordeel vir die deelnemer/s gesin aan.

*

Noem die bydrae wat van elke deelnemer verwag word.

*

Skep die geleentheid vir kommentaar en vrae.



Meg Mekkie Sê

Hoe Om Saam 'n Oplossing Vir 'n Probleem Te Bereik.

Ons word dikwels gekonfronteer met probleme waarvoor ons nie altyd 'n oplossing kan vind nie.

Soms het ons probleme wat nie binne die familie groep opgelos kan word nie. Dan is dit handig om buite die familie te netwerk vir moontlike oplossings.

*

Stel die kern van die probleem kort en duidelik.

*

Wys die raadgever daarop dat dit 'n gedeelde probleem is.

*

Sê dat bystand vir jou belangrik is met die klem op die deelnemers se vermoëns.

*

Vra vir voorstelle.

*

Luister na elke voorstel sonder onderbreking.

*

Spreek vertroue uit in die sukses van samewerking.

*

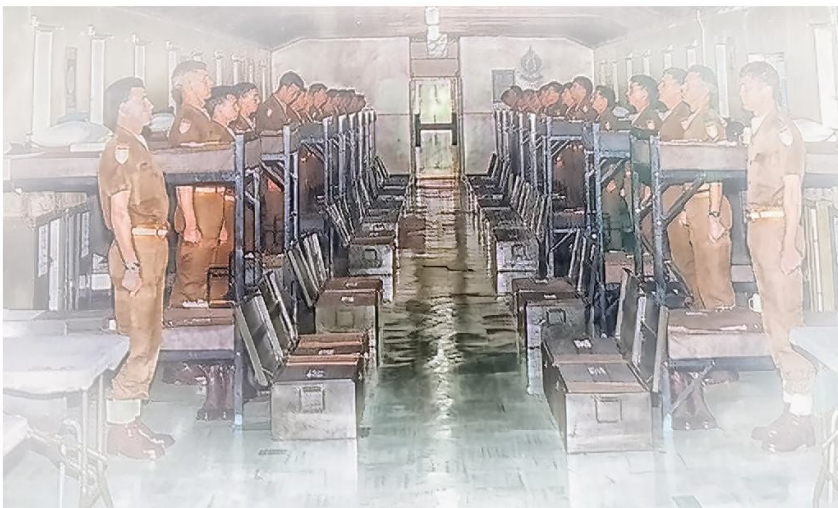
Besluit saam oor die beste oplossing.

*

Bevestig dit wat jy gehoor het deur dit te herhaal.

*

Druk waardering uit vir die feit dat samewerking suksesvol was



Hoe Om Vir Raad En Inligting Te Vra

Niemand is alwetend nie. Daar is baie dinge wat se antwoorde buite die familie se kennis is. Elke familie lid het die verantwoordelikheid om kennis en raad in te win.

*

Maak seker wat jy presies wil vra. Sal jou vraag die kern van die probleem vasvat.

*

Bepaal wie is die beste persoon om te nader.

*

Is die advies wat jy verlang gekoppel aan familie doelwitte.

*

Beklemtoon dat jy die raadgever se vaardighede om die probleem op te los vertrou.

*

Stel jou behoefte duidelik en kortliks,

*

Luister aandagtig en maak aantekeninge.

*

Bedank die persoon vir sy/haar tyd en aandag.



Meg Mekkie Sê

Hoe Om 'n Taak Doeltreffend Te Delegeer

Die take in die familie kan slegs doeltreffend wees as die hele familie meehelp. Daarom is dit belangrik om take te verdeel sodat dit eweredig en binne die familielid se vermoë is. Dit

gebeur ook dat take herverdeel word. Dit kan slegs bereik word deur die mannekrag tot jou beskikking doeltreffend te benut. Dit beteken dat jy moet kan deleger.

*

Ontleed die taak in terme van wie wat kan doen.

*

Besluit wie die werk gaan doen.

*

Beskryf die algehele taak en doelwit.

*

Wys uit hoekom die persoon die beste is vir die taak.

*

Stel jou vereiste en definieer sy/haar gesag.

*

Bespreek moontlike planne om te verseker dat die taak behoorlik verstaan word.

*

Besluit saam op 'n tyd vir voltooiing.

*

Spreek vertroue uit in sy suksesvolle uitvoering van die taak en stel jouself beskikbaar vir raad en inligting



Hoe Om Take Toe Te Ken

Vir die familie groep om goed te fungeer moet lede met take toegeken word. Dit kan wissel van kort tot langtermyn take. Wanneer jy take toeken dan kommunikeer jy. Om doeltreffend te kommunikeer moet instruksies akkuraat wees.

*

Bepaal duidelik wat jy met die instruksie wil bereik.

*

Identifiseer die elemente van die instruksie.

(Wie, Wat, Waar, Wanneer, Waarom, Wat daarna)

(W,W,W,W,W,W)

*

Verseker jy het die onverdeelde aandag van die persoon.

*

Ken take duidelik en kortliks toe in ooreenstemming met die elemente en in volgorde van uitvoering.

*

Maak seker dat die instruksie ontvang en verstaan word.

*

Moedig vrae aan.

*

Inkorporeer 'n opvolgprosedure in die opdrag.

*

Beklemtoon dat jy altyd bereid is om raad te gee of vrae te beantwoord.



Meg Mekkie Sê

Hoe Om Instruksies te Ontvang

As deel van die familie sal jy daaglik instruksies ontvang wat jy sal moet uitvoer of toesien dat dit uitgevoer word. Die manier waarop jy na opdragte luister en verstaan is belangrik.

*

Luister aandagtig na die opdrag en sy besonderhede.

*

Toets die opdrag aan die elemente van uitvoering (W,W,W,W,W,W).

*

Vra verdere besonderhede oor die elemente wat nie vir jou duidelik is nie.

*

Herhaal die opdrag sodat die persoon wat dit gegee het kan oordeel of jy dit verstaan of nie.

*

Maak seker dat jy terugvoer gee soos jy met die taak vorder.



Hoe Om Verandering Te Implementeer

Die lewe verander voortdurend. Nuwe lede in die familie, die familie se inkomste en vele ander. Verandering verg dat die familie lewe ook voortdurend aanpassings moet maak.

Hierdie aanpassings lei daartoe dat die optrede van lede ook moet verander. Daar sal dikwels van jou as die hoof van die huis verwag word om jou familie aan veranderinge bekend te stel. Dit is 'n feit dat mense nie altyd veranderinge sonder vrae aanvaar nie, veral veranderinge wat die lid persoonlik raak. Dit is noodsaaklik vir gesagsfigure om veranderinge in te voer en te implementeer op so 'n manier dat die familie nie weerstand daarteen opbou nie.

*

Stel die verandering bekend.

*

Verduidelik die rede vir die verandering in terme van familie doelwitte.

*

Verduidelik die besonderhede van die verandering.

*

Verduidelik aan die lede hoe die veranderinge hulle sal raak.

*

As die verandering verskillende aksies vereis, gee aan elkeen volledig instruksie oor wat van hom of haar verwag word.

*

Vra oor en luister na probleme wat as gevolg van die verandering voorsien word en betrek die persoon wat enige probleem noem by gesamentlike probleemoplossing.

*

Versoek familieledes vir hul hulp om 'n sukses van die implementering van verandering te maak.



Meg Mekkie Sê

Hoe Om Weerstand Teen Verandering Te Oorkom.

Wanneer verandering in die familie plaasvind kan onsekerheid veroorsaak dat die verandering teëgestaan word. Hierdie weerstand veroorsaak ongelukkigheid wat tot alle vlakke van die familie kan deursuur.

*

Identifiseer die individu wat weerstand toon.

*

Vra hierdie lid om sy/haar probleem te formuleer en luister met begrip.

*

Probeer om die probleem op te los deur individuele behoeftes in ag te neem.

*

Beklemtoon die behoefte aan verandering in terme van familie doelwitbereiking.

*

Gee bykomende instruksies indien nodig.

*

Druk vertroue uit in sy/haar bereidwilligheid om sy/haar persoonlike weerstand aan dié van die familie ondergeskik te stel.

*

Wys duidelik daarop dat dissiplinêre aksies sal volg op voortgesette weerstand.

*

Neem dissiplinêre of regstellende stappe.

*

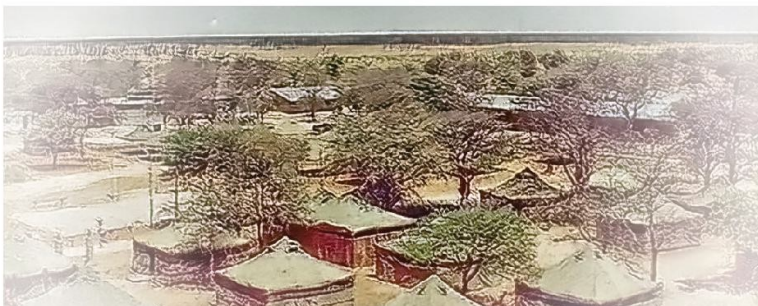
Regstellende/dissiplinêre aksies sal dit verseker.

*

Foute word betyds reggestel en sodat energie nie onnodig vermors word nie.

*

Prosedures word aangeneem om herhaling van die foute te voorkom.



Hoe om Opbouende Kritiek Te Gee.

Soos gesinslede groei in hulle lewens-fases volg elkeen sy gekose paadjie. Daarvoor het hulle raad en bystand nodig. Dan word dit soms nodig om hulle gedrag te kritiseer.

*

Erken die lid se gewilligheid om die aksie korrek uit te voer.

*

Noem die verkeerde optrede sonder om die foute te bespreek.

*

Demonstreer/bespreek die korrekte optrede en wys die voordeel(e) uit.

*

Gee geleentheid vir oefening en gee erkenning as die korrekte optrede plaasvind.

*

Herhaal die prosedure indien nodig.



Meg Mekkie Sê

Hoe Om Verkeerde Gedrag/Dade Te Hanteer

Om te groei is om te eksperimenteer. Jy sal vind dat jou familie se gedrag en handeling soms sal afwyk van die korrekte. Hoe verder hulle toegelaat word om sonder teësprak af te wyk,

hoe moeiliker raak dit om hulle weer in lyn te bring. Daarom moet jy as die verantwoordelike familielid dit so gou moontlik kaanspreek. Die aansporing van die korrekte manier kan hulle motiveer om vanself op die regte manier op te tree.

*

Wys die verkeerde gedrag/aksie uit.

*

Sê duidelik waarom dit onaanvaarbaar is.

*

Gee onderrig in die korrekte gedrag/aksiegedrag.

*

Beklemtoon hoe die familie doelwitte deur die korrekte gedrag baat vind.

*

Wat is die persoonlike voordeel as gevolg van korrekte gedrag.

*

Dissiplinêre optrede wat sal volg op voortgesette verkeerde gedrag.

Indien die korrekte aksie/gedrag plaasvind, spreek uitdruklike goedkeuring uit, indien nie, tree dissiplinêr op.



Hoe Om Tugstappe Te Neem

Dissiplinêre optrede is noodsaaklik wanneer die optrede van 'n familielid teenstrydig is met die algemene doelwitbereiking. Dissiplinêre stappe is deel van jou plig as gesaghebbende volwassene. Jou optrede moet egter redelik wees en gekoppel wees aan die bevordering van familie doelwitte.

Wys die oortreding uit.

Gee die oortreder die geleentheid om sy saak te stel en luister aandagtig daarna.



Meg Mekkie Sê

nie.

Spreek vertroue uit dat gedrag in die toekoms korrek sal wees.

Maak seker dat die oortreder nog steeds die familie se liefde ervaar.

Beklemtoon dat die oortreding bots met die familie doelwitte.

Neem die oortreders se verduideliking in ag by die bepaling van die aard van straf.

Maak seker dat die straf toepaslik is vir die oortreding.

Straf die oortreding en nie die oortreder

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Crossword Puzzle (P87)

Answers

Across

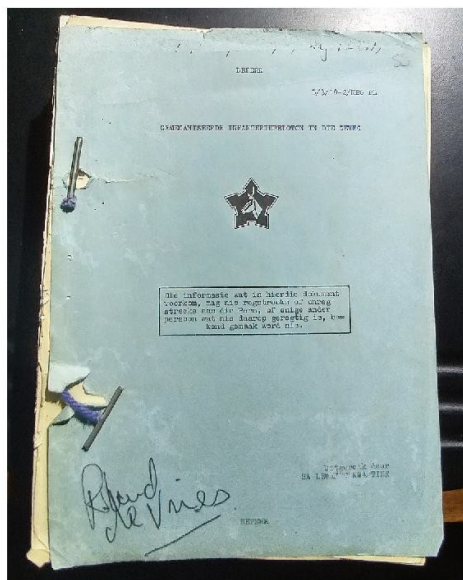
1. TIFFIES
7. ASKARI
8. TOWBAR
9. BUFFEL
10. OPERASIEMODULER
13. PROTEADAISY
15. TOFFIEGROVE
18. MOBILITATE
19. STEPOUT
20. SPAREWHEEL
21. MIDDELBURG
22. SARGENELL
24. VUURGORDEL
27. OPPIE
28. LOMBA

Down

2. SIXINLINE
3. OMUTHIYA
4. OPSMEDIC
5. CHESTBOX
6. FLOSSIE
10. OPERATIONREINDEER
11. LOGISTICS
12. RATELSS
14. MERLYN
16. BUSSING
17. RATEL
23. VILJOEN
25. UPINGTON
26. RUNFLAT

Lessons from "The Infantry Platoon in Battle"

Tony Savides



CARE OF MEN

The first responsibility of all commanders is the care of their men. A sense of comradeship between all ranks should be encouraged.

As far as the essential needs of security allow, men should always be kept informed of the latest situation. They will work better for knowing what they are doing and why they are doing it. The commander must continually look after his men's interests and welfare. He should see that they are as comfortable and as well cared for as the situation allows and that their duties are fairly divided.

MORALE

Morale is founded on discipline, leadership and self-respect.

It is the degree of confidence in the mind of a soldier when he identifies himself with a group, accepts its aims and works hard to achieve them.

In a platoon, a soldier's morale means how he feels about himself, his job and the rest of his platoon. If he feels that he is accepted as a member of the platoon, that he is a useful member of it and has a worthwhile

job which he does well, the chances are that he will be a happy and enthusiastic soldier.

If all the members of a platoon feel like this and are well trained and well led, they will pull together as an efficient team. Each and every man will be determined to avoid letting down either his own friends or the reputation of his platoon, company or battalion. His morale will be high.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership amounts to winning the confidence and co-operation of men to such an extent that they will readily and cheerfully undertake any task given to them.

Men expect their leaders to set a good example in every way, to be efficient, just and genuinely interested in their personal welfare.

Leaders will not gain the confidence of their men unless and until they measure up to these standards.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline helps the soldier to overcome fear and fatigue. It is founded on self-respect, self-control and a sense of duty.

It enables the soldier to carry out orders without regard to his own safety in the interest of the other members of his platoon. It calls for high standards of leadership.

Good discipline results as much from cheerful co-operation as it does from sheer obedience.

If morale is high, many a man will impose a much more exacting discipline on himself than anyone else can impose on him.



ADAPTED FOR A NON-MILITARY ENVIRONMENT.

CARE OF PERSONNEL

The first responsibility of all managers is the care (welfare) of their personnel. A sense of comradeship at all levels should be encouraged. (Despite the modern trend, people are not a mere Human Resource!)

As far as the essential needs of security and confidentiality allow, personnel should always be kept informed of the latest situation (regarding the aims and objectives of the organisation and how they will affect the personnel). They will work better for knowing what they are doing and why they are doing it. The manager must continually be interested in his personnel's interests and welfare. He should see that they are as suitably trained, properly accommodated (with all the means and middles necessary for their work) and as well cared for as his duties dictate and as the situation allows. Duties must be equitably divided according to the responsibilities, accountability, roles, functions and ability of each – which may differ.

MORALE

Morale is founded on discipline, leadership and self-respect.

It is the degree of confidence in the mind of a person when he or she identifies with the group, accepts its aims and works hard to achieve them. Good pay might help but is seldom a key factor. Job satisfaction often leads to high morale.

In an organisation, a person's morale means how he or she feels about himself or herself, his or her job and the rest of the organisation. If he or she feels that he or she is accepted as a member of the organisation, that

he or she is a useful member of it and has a worthwhile job which he or she does well, the chances are that he or she will be a happy and enthusiastic worker.

If all the members of an organisation feel like this and are well trained and well led and managed, they will pull together as an efficient team. Each and every person will be determined to avoid letting down either his or her own friends or the reputation of his or her section, department or the organisation itself. His or her morale will be high. High morale and loyalty are mutually dependent, even mutually inclusive.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership amounts to winning the confidence and co-operation of personnel to such an extent that they will readily and cheerfully undertake any task given to them, i.e. do what they were hired and are paid to do!. Management does not always equate to leadership – but should do. Managers at every level are, after all, supposed to be leaders!

Personnel expect their leaders to set a good example in every way, to be efficient, just and genuinely interested in their personal welfare.

Leaders (i.e. managers) will not gain the confidence of their personnel unless and until they measure up to these standards.

DISCIPLINE

Discipline helps workers to overcome anxiety and fatigue. It is founded on self-respect, self-control and a sense of duty.

It enables the worker to carry out instructions or his work without regard to own needs in the interest of the other members of the organisation, and of the organisation itself. It calls for high standards of leadership.

Good discipline results as much from cheerful co-operation as it does from sheer obedience. It depends greatly on mutual respect, co-operation, fairness and reciprocal loyalty.

If morale is high, personnel will impose a much more exacting discipline on themselves than anyone else can.



Die Diere Van Omuthiya

Daar is geen tekort aan stories oor troeteldiere tydens die Bosoerlog nie. Byna elke basis het sy kwota van een of meer gehad.

Op Rantsoensterkte

So was daar Bevare Seehoender Kiepie te Makalani Basis (Oshakati) wat aangedring het op sy sopie bier per dag. Die Recce's se leeu Terry te Fort Doppies. Dan die leeu "Tosca" te Oshakati.

Daar is tientalle verhale oor nagapies. Die hond "Fapla" op Elundu wat saam patrolie gestap het. Reptiele - van slange tot verkleurmannelies. Die mak uil wat in Ondjiva se siekeboek ingeboek het.

Die donkie genaamd "Tiffany" te Oshivello wat elke aand sy kwota bier gekry het. Dan 'n liter melk soggens vir sy babelaas.

Die blou apie by 'n Swapo groep wie se gehoor so skerp was dat hy 'n helikopter kon hoor aankom lank voordat die menslike oor dit kon hoor. Hy was die Swapo groep se "radar" en helikopter verklikker.

Die Lugmag Pos te Rundu se kat "Ballas" wat later met eerbewys en grafsteen sy rusplek gevind het. 25 Veldgenie se aap genaamd Jab.

Sodoliet in Kaokoland se bok wat verslaaf was aan sigarette... Hy het dit nie gerook nie, maar geëet.

Ruacana se mak vark. Hy was soos 'n hond, maar het alle parades opgeneuk deur die sammajoor aan die kuit te byt.

201Bn Omega se witborskraai wat die basis op horings kon neem. Waarskynlik het hierdie kraai oorsprong gegee aan die bataljon se pet kenteken.

Die Diere van Omuthiya

Die 61 Omuthiya Basis kan self spog met 'n indrukwekkende versameling van Fauna.

Die Olifantkalf

Thys Rall

Die olifantkalf se verblyf was kortstondig, maar is vermeldbaar. Thys Rall onthou uit die jaar 1979/80 hoe 'n paar troepe 'n olifantkalfie in 'n Ratel geprop het terwyl die kalfie se ma daar naby protes aanteken daarteen. Hy vra hulle toe wat hulle presies in gedagte het met hierdie handeling. Hulle antwoord was dat hulle hom Omuthiya toe gaan vat as troeteldier. Thys het dit toe nodig gevind om ook die groter prentjie onder die aandag hierdie olifant temmers te bring deur hulle aandag te vestig op die feit dat die ma van hierdie kalfie nie behoorlik gekonsulteer is hieroor nie. In reaksie op haar kalfie se noodkrete kan sy moontlike verskriklike skade aan die basis aanrig wat al die harde werk om die basis te bou ongedaan kon maak. Hulle is toe streng, kort en kragtig beveel om die kalfie met onmiddellike effek sy vryheid terug te gee.

Die Zebra

Kmdt J Dippenaar.

Met Omuthiya so naby aan die Etosha-wildreser-



vaat, was dit geen verrassing om 'n zebra kalf tussen die soldaat se tente te vind nie. Dit was nie baie lank voordat die zebra bederf en baie stout geword het nie. Die zebra het graag die kombuis besoek, waar hy vars groente gekry het.

Hy het die gewoonte ontwikkel om op een van die sementpaadjies tussen die tente te gaan staan. Alle nie-rangdraers kon vrylik verby hom beweeg. Hy het egter rangdraers uitgesonder. Hy het hulle nie verby laat kom nie. Met 'n vertoon van tande en maanhaarskud het zebra hulle verplig om eerder 'n ompad te stap. Hy het veral dit vir Kmdt Dippenaar moeilik gemaak. Sou jy hom probeer wegjaag, het hy sy rug na die persoon gedraai terwyl hy voortgaan om onophoudelik met sy agterpote te skop. Dit was nie 'n lekker ervaring nie alhoewel dit duidelik was dat die zebra die aandag geniet het. Hierdie onaanvaarbare gedrag deur die zebra het gelei tot die opdrag aan die troepe dat hulle van die zebra ontslae moes raak. Dit was eers 'n rukkie daarna dat die waarheid oor sy vertrek aan die lig gekom het.

Die troepe het glo saam met hul vriende by SWA Spes georganiseer om 'n perdesleepwag na Omuthiya te stuur. Die zebra is swart geverf met die kamoeflersalf en daarna deur die plaagbeheerhede by Oshivello vervoer in sy nuwe hoedanigheid as perd na 'n plaas naby Tsumeb. Die zebra het uiteindelik op 'n plaas in die Wes-Kaap beland.

Another version of Zebdonk

Grant Michael Siebert

We called him Zebdonk because he looked like a zebra but behaved like a donkey. I was log officer from about Aug '79 to June '80 and de Villiers was one of my corporals - he was "mom" to Zebdonk and I with my tent-mate Jakes Scholtz (Tpt Officer) were "dad's". We raided the Swa-Spes unit just south of us at night to get supplies for him from their horse unit. True that we dyed him to look like a horse - gave de Villiers pass to fetch his bakkie in the Cape. With the help of the tiffies he built a horse box on the back of the bakkie, but in the end he was injuring himself in transit and was given to a farmer between Omuthiya and Tsumeb.

The Chicken Thief 1979

Cmdt J Dippenaar

Another matter that had the leader group concerned

was the regular complaints by the Local Population (LP) that their chickens were stolen. The information about the truck registration number and time date was always correct, which indicated that there was some truth in the reports. The possibility that there was not enough food for the soldiers was also checked but that was not the reason for the disappearance of the chickens.

Inspections then showed that there was a python held captive in a cage and the chickens were used to feed the python. Again the troops were instructed to get rid of the snake. Their story was that the SPCA would remove the snake but the story that did the rounds was that the python was flown to the "States" in a soldier's trunk (trommel).

Die Aasvoël

Dawid Lotter

Dit moes ongeveer 1982 gewees het wat 61 Meg se troepe 'n jong aasvoël hant grootgemaak het. Hy het tydens die inoefening vir Ops Askari by Dolfyn Basis opgedaag. Hy het besluit dat 82 Bde se behandeling beter was wat hy op Omuthiya ontvang het. Later het hy terug getrek na Omuthiya waar ek hom weer in Julie 1984 raakgeloop het. Toe was hy uitgegroeï en baie lastig. Hy sou vir hom 'n troep teiken en hom dan met sulke hop-hop spronge volg. Met so af en toe 'n geniepsige byt aan dié se kuit. Ek het hom weer te Omuthiya raakgeloop in 1986.

Tydens Februarie 1987 het hy tydens 'n Bravo Komp stalparade vir opwindig gesorg. Hy sou wag totdat 'n Rateldrywer oor die enjin kompartement kniel. Dan om met 'n lae invlug op die niksvermoedende drywer se skouer te land. Baie snaaks vir die omstanders maar nie so snaaks vir die teiken persoon nie. Iewers in Mei 1987 het ek hom die laaste keer gesien. Hy het net verdwyn. Op navraag by die buurbasisse te Oshivello het die gebblyk dat hy met sy wye vlerkspan homself doodgeskok het op die hoogspanningsdrade van Eskom. Dit mag wees dat daar meer as een Aasvoël ter sprake is. Maar ek glo dit is dieselfde een van 1982.

Attie die Bobbejaan

Die mees berugste diereid van Omuthiya is sonder twyfel Attie die Bobbejaan. Dit is nie heeltemal duidelik of Attie een bobbejaan was en of daar oor die jare ander Atties ook gewees het nie.

Die Attie uit die 1980's is na Omuthiya gebring deur Attie Adlem wat hom by die Tsumeb polisiestasie gekry het. Daar is verskeie verhale oor Attie. Attie het sy bier geniet. Wanneer hy egter gesuip geraak het dan het hy op die naaste bed wat hy kon kry gaan slaap. Die bedeienaars moes dan maar vir die nag ander slaapplek kry.

Hy het ook die gewoonte gehad om in 'n tent in te vaar en alles wat hy kon omgekeer – veral voor bevelvoerders inspeksies. Toe hy egter een nag in die Opskamer dieselfde truuk probeer het, het Kmdt van Zyl hom uit die basis verban.

John Boulter

Kmdt van Zyl want him out of the unit lines, so I got him and took him down to where the 82 Mech Bde place 20 km away. Thought he would be OK with them. Next morning at 0530 as I drove in he was sitting on the gate. Punched the RSM one day a good shot in the eye, he had a black eye from it.



Kmdt Gert van Zyl

Die troepe het hom hierdie naam gegee. Hy het op 'n onwettige wyse deel van die eenheid geword want as 'n reël was dat geen troeteldiere binne die eenheidslyne toegelaat nie. Hy was deur een van die troepe ingesmokkel en aanvanklik weggesteek totdat dit nie meer moontlik was nie. Ek het vir RSM HG Smit opdrag gegee om die bobbejaan uit die eenheid te laat verwyder.

'n Afvaardiging troepe het my egter kom sien en gepleit dat Attie moes bly en ek het toegegee op voorwaarde dat hy nie los mag loop nie, nie kwaad doen nie en beheer moes word. Die voorwaardes was aanvanklik streng nagekom.

Op 'n dag kom kla die spysenier op Omuthiya egter dat daar kos uit die kombuis wegraak ten spyte van die feit dat hy die plek gesluit hou. Die van u wat die kombuisopset op Omuthiya geken het, sal weet van die opening tussen die muur en die dak van die gebou waar geen mens kon deurklim, kos steel en terug klim sonder spesiale klimtoerusting nie.

Nie lank daarna nie kom kla die klerasiestoomman dat klere uit sy stoor wegraak ten spyte van die feit dat die plek gesluit word. Die struktuur van hierdie stoor was soortgelyk aan die van die kombuis.

Ek neem toe in dieselfde tyd waar dat Attie nie meer aan 'n leitou vas is nie maar vry rond beweeg en dinge doen tot groot vermaak van die inwoners van Omuthiya. Ek sit toe twee en twee bymekaar en om 'n lang storie kort te maak vind toe uit dat die troepe Attie gebruik het om hierdie diefstalle te pleeg. Met die klimvermoë van 'n bobbejaan was dit vir Attie kinderspeletjies om sonder hulp deur die opening tussen die muur en die dak te klim en die troepe se behoefte aan kos en klerasie te bevredig.

Hierdie was genoeg rede om Attie summier uit die eenheidslyne te deporteer. Ek gee toe opdrag dat hy gevang word, dit het 'n eenheidspoging geveer, en Attie is uiteindelik bo op die watertoring vasgekeer en gearrester. Ek het toe AO2 Boulter, die battery sersant majoor opdrag gegee om Attie in 'n voertuig te laai en êrens langs die pad Tsumeb toe, ver weg vanaf Omuthiya, af te laai.

AO2 Boulter vertel toe die storie dat hy Attie in die omgewing van die Oshivello vrygelaat het. Attie het met sy vrylating (hy was glad nie gelukkig met die

toedrag van sake en die behandeling wat hy ontvang het nie en het dit luidkeels te kenne gegee) op die naaste miershoop geklim, geobserveer en die opleidingsbasis van die Infanterieskool by Oshivello waargeneem. Daarna het AO Boulter vir Attie alleen gelaat en vertrek met die wete dat Attie 'n nuwe tuiste by die Infanterieskool se opleidingsbasis sou vind.

Dit was drie dae later dat die hekwag op Omuthiya per radio die Opskamer laat weet dat Attie so pas deur die hek is nadat hy amper die hekwag aangerand het.

Na 'n lang vergadering met die beskermhere van Attie is toe besluit dat hy maar kon aanbly, maar as volledige lid. Sy naam moes op die appélboek kom, hy moes onder beheer gehou word, die eskapades met die kos en klerasie diefstal moes staak en hy moes die eenheid vergesel op operasies.

Attie was saam tydens Operasie Dolfyn en Operasie Askari. Sy lêplek was op die kamoeleernet op die Ratel se spaarwiel. Tydens heg en steg beweging deur digte bos was Attie partymaal meer op die grond as op die Ratel. Hy het egter nie 'n bang haar op sy lyf gehad nie en het nie geglo aan dekking neem tydens vuurgevegte met die vyand nie.

Attie is egter, so was aan my vertel, tydens 'n vyandelike artilleriebombardement naby Cahama tydens Operasie Askari deur skrapnel getref en het so gesneuwel. Hy is met die nodige eerbewys daar begrawe.

1983 - Attie die bobbejaan

Sersant-majoor Kobus Kemp

Attie was 'n boosdoener, slinks en slim op sy natuurlike manier want Kees het mos maar 'n streek gehad wat ons nie altyd van bewus was nie, al was hy mak gewees.

Hy was opgepas deur 'n troep wat permanent op Omuthiya was in sy NDP tyd. C Eskn se pakhuis was aan die agterkant van die KM langs die Wapenpakhuis. Verveelheid maak laat 'n mens soms kattekwaad aanvang, of ledigheid is die duiwel se oorkussing. 'n Betrokke dag het S/Sers Jan Lourens 'n ratpak geneem, alles uitgehaal en toe 'n groot skerpioen daarin geplaas en vir Attie gegee. Hy verskeur die ratpak en met eens gryp hy die skerpioen, gifangel af, skerpioen in die kies en wat 'n smaaklike lekkerny.

Die volgende ratpak het 'n rubberslang in. Mens, wat 'n gedoente, Attie gooi alles weg, spring in die boom

en blaf, bevuil die plek en maak dit nat asof dit lank gelede gereen het in die gebied. Hy was baie kwaad en verontwaardig en wou net almal byt. Toe die troepe gaan vir brunch het hy geweier om uit die boom te klim. 'n Paar dae later gee 'n eskadron troep vir hom 'n energiestafie, hy neem dit, haal die papier versigtig af en verslind dit. Dieselfde troep dink hy is baie intelligent, terg die bobbejaan en toe hy hom kon kry gryp die bobbejaan se kind sy boshoe van sy kop af in 'n japtrap is Kees die boom in met hoed en al! Ha ha ha, die hoed in twee tot drie stukke geskeur. Nou waar kry hy weer 'n boshoe? So die eskadron sersant-majoor het hom uitgesorteer, glo ek.

Die RSM en ek doen basisinspeksie, toe ons by TPT se kantoor kom lê Kees Attie en slaap en hy is ook vasmag met 'n ketting aan 'n boom. Die RSM roep hom. Attie staan so lui- lui op en kom aangestap of die gebied aan hom behoort. Dit was ook so "I am the BOSS even if the RSM is near" in sy houding. Kees gaan sit, trek die ketting styf en dan skuif hy so 'n meter terug. Sersant-majoor H.G. Smit gee hom so 'n klap, dit was mis en hy gee pad nog so 'n entjie. Toe die RSM weer gebukkend nader kom was Attie reg vir hom, hy spring soos blits vorentoe en klap en gryp die RSM in sy gesig.

Die RSM retireer agtertoe met spoed en sê: "Gee my die 9 mm dat ek hom van die gras af maak!"

Ek keer op my beurt en met die kom Sersant Dennis Willows uit sy kantoor: "Los vir Attie hy gaan julle byt en seermaak, kom weg daar."

Wat is uit die les geleer – "Don't underestimate you enemy".

In die winter het hy saam met sy oppasser, kameraad, boesemvriend, vertroueling in sy eie slaapsak geslaap maar o wee, as dit snerpand koud was het hy in die nag agter sy rug in gaan kruip vir hitte en beskerming. Slim nê! Kees raak lui en wil nie opstaan wanneer die natuur roep nie. Dan dink hy hy staan by 'n krip en urineer in die bed. Die tyd as die diensbussie en voertuie van Tsumeb arriveer en Attie sit buite die tent vasmag aan 'n plaal weet jy: "Mmmmmmm.....ja ja, hy het 'n glips gehad in die bed! Shame!"

Veterane Resepte

TOFFIE SE CHICKEN KORMA RESEP:

BESTANDELE

500G Hoender
1 Groot ui gekerf
3 Groot aartappels in blokkies gesny
1 Blikkie Chillie Boerie Relish
2/3 Lepels gehoopte kerrie poeier
50ml Swart asyn
3 Eetlepels suiker
500ml Room
Olyfolie
Botter

METODE

-Braai helfde van uie met botter en bietjie olyfolie
-Voeg Kerriepoeier, asyn en suiker by. Braai tot 'n pasta (voeg bietjie water by indien nodig)
-Haal van hitte af en los om te koel.
-In 'n ander groter pot, braai oorblywende uie tot glaserig en haal uit pot uit.
-Sny hoender in blokkies en braai in olie en botter tot bruin.
-Voeg gebraaide ui en kerrie mengsel met boerie relish by hoender.
-Gooi koppie water by en kook vir 20 minute.
-Voeg aartappels by en kook tot sag.
-Gooi room in en prut op 'n lae hitte tot reg.



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Nicole Dickson shared this post on Facebook of her husband cooking a roast en roete to Durban.



Operasie Modular Resepte (Tong in die Kies)

Rypgemaakte Beesvleis Snitte

Tydens Ops Modular 1987 het onse RSM mooi na Bravo Komp/ Tenkafweer gekyk. Ons het altyd meer gekry as die ander subeenhede. Samjoor Kobus Kemp was in 1986 die Komp samjoor van Bravo, en hy het sy lojaliteite teenoor ons onthou. As ons dan vars vleis kry, dan moet mens weet dit is lankal nie meer bevrore snitte nie, want die Puma het alreeds die bevrore snitte so 24 tot 36 uur terug afgelaai. So jy kry - jy braai - jy eet.

Op 'n esbit stofie kan jy dit nie doen nie! So jy maak 'n vinnige mopaniehoutvuur en gebruik die Ratel grids wat die staalplaatvloer van die bodem oppervlak skei. Die ideaal is natuurlik as daar 'n Buffel in die omtrek is, is om dié se enjingrids te gebruik, as jy die crew kon oorreed. En dan moes dit maar vining wees want die vyand wag nie vir jou nie. Of jy gebruik sommer die Ratel se skopgraaf. Jy brand hom eers skoon, want hy word ook gebruik om jou maagwerkings in 'n gaatjie te verberg. Dit was die SAW se metode om sy deel te doen om die vlieë plaag te onderdruk.

Die vyand het 'n neus gehad vir die soort situasie. Vir dae lank weet jy nie van hulle nie, maar as daardie ou vars vleisie aankom, begin hulle met allerhande bewegings – so asof hulle weet. Miskien het hulle??

Nou hoe bewaar jy daai vleisie dan, of as daar te veel is, hoe bewaar jy dié? Uithang vir biltong die kan jy nie, want binne een minuut het 200 vlieë daarop toegesak, en binne 45 min begin daai snit uit die Wes Transvaalse vlakte lewe kry. As jy 'n plan kon beraam om die vlieë te stop, dan word jy gekonfronteer met die volgende probleem – STOF. 'n Meg Mag aan die beweeg skop baie stof op. So as jy dan daardie opsie kies, kan jy net sowel aan 'n stuk klip knbel. Dieselfde smaak en effek!! Modder tussen jou tande. Niks lekker nie.

Maar as jy daai ou stukkie steak wil bewaar vir 'n volgende geleentheid, dan sit jy op hom. In 'n Ratel is jy mos maar saamgekoek soos sardyne in 'n blik. Jy sit waar jy sit, al duur die aanmars nou ook 10 uur. So af en toe staan jy bo by die Ratel luik uit, maar dan gaan sit jy weer.

DIE RESEP

Vat 'n Ratpack box se karton gedeelte en plaas dit rondom die steak.

Maak seker dit omvou alle dele.

Plaas dan die Ratpack plastiek daarom. Net liggies, want die doel is om jou broek te beskerm van die bloederige kol op daardie strategiese plek wat jou eie is. Want plastiek in Angola hitte laat daardie vleis sweet en dan raak dit slymerig en amper snotterig.

Dan sit jy maar daarop, tot die volgende rustige plek waar jy dan 'n vuurtjie kan aanslaan.

Afhangende van die tyd wat jy spandeer op daardie stukkie steak in die beweeg van die kolonne, hoe platter raak hy.

As hy nou mooi plat gesit is, en jy weet sy volgende fase is om te begin beweeg, dan weet jy dat jy prima ryp steak het. Net voor jy hom dan op die rooster gooi, so sakkie ratpack sout.

Die Spur kan nie daarop verbeter nie.

Naskrif: Ek het later gewonder oor die resepte. Die winde in jou maag het ook mos maar nie 'n vaste patroon nie. As hy 'n wind wil uit, dan wil hy uit. Daardie poep wat jy los en dan jou buurman met veronywaardiging aankyk, en soos hy ongemaklik rondkyk, blameer julle beide die steak. Hou tog net hierdie resepte buite bereik van die Spur.

Poepsteak klink nie vir my lekker nie?



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